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Young Love

GEORGE A. DORSEY



Belle Hermit Roosevelt

FOUNDATIONS

Dear Wanda Rodolph

Dear Miss Richard

I want to say how
truly I have enjoyed
the notion of being more
intimately associated with
your distinguished
father - and how
thoroughly pleased
and appreciated has
been the kind use
shown me by your
good mother and
your good self.

Truly
yours

Madrid
May 9
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C.



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1. The first group of people who are interested in the results of the study are the researchers themselves. They want to know if the study was successful in achieving its goals and if the data collected is reliable and valid. They also want to know if the study has contributed to the field of research and if it has provided any new insights or findings.

1. The first group of people who are interested in the study of the history of the United States are the people who are interested in the history of the United States.

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1. The first step is to identify the problem or question that needs to be answered. This involves understanding the context and the specific information required.

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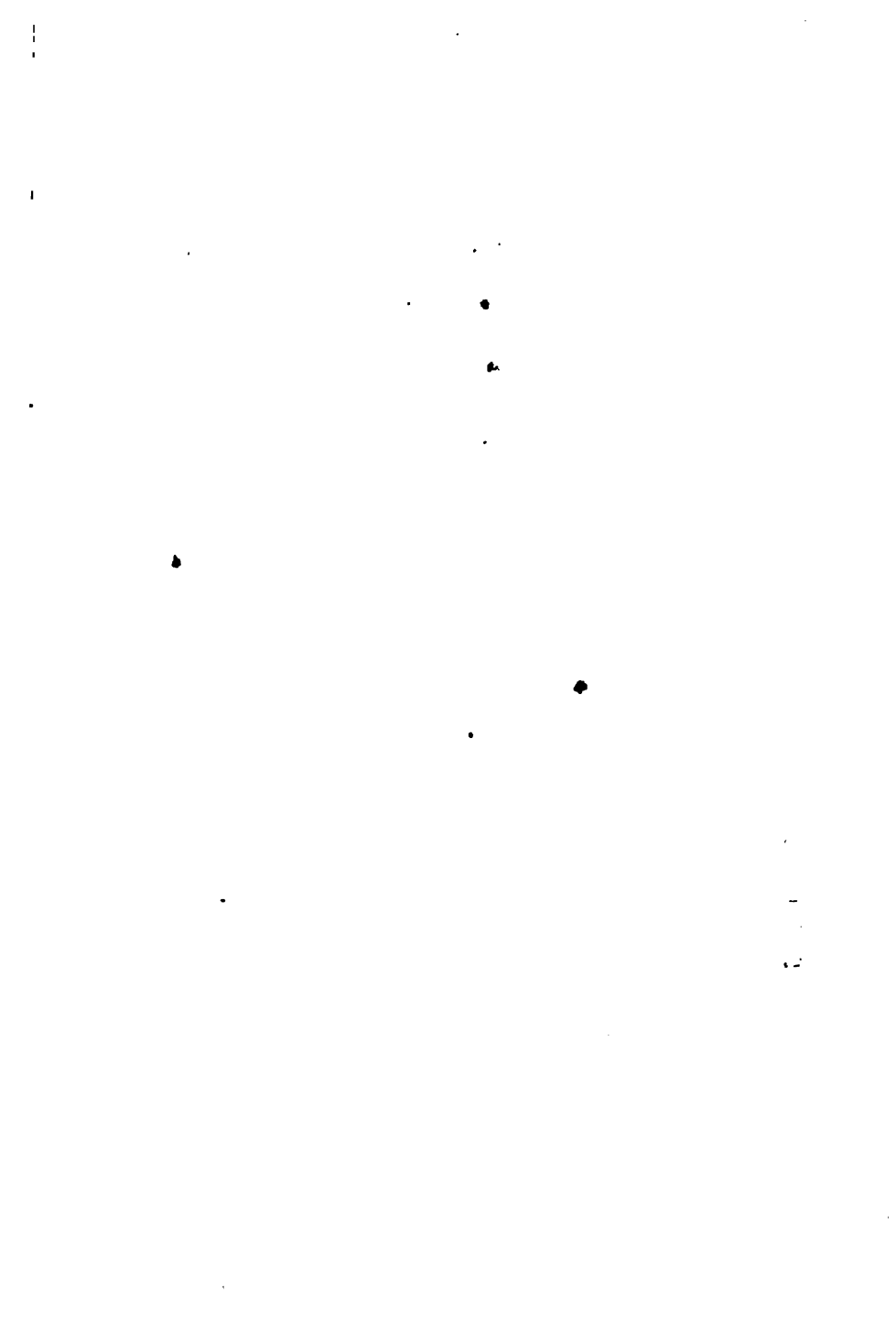
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YOUNG LOW

GEORGE A. DORSEY

YOUNG LOW

By
GEORGE A. DORSEY



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BY GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY

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*To Mother
Who Encouraged*

*To Father
Who Understood*

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PART ONE: COMMENCEMENT

YOUNG LOW

PART ONE: COMMENCEMENT

CHAPTER I

BUSINESS OF BEING BORN

AND just think, Pa, he's the youngest boy in the class!" said Mother. Then she turned to me and beamed, "My! Son, but we're proud of you."

"Ain't we, Pa?"—this to Father. "And he's the best boy and the smartest boy in the whole country"—this to nobody in particular.

Father whistled softly, to himself. Which meant—Father was thinking, sparring for time. He was not yet ready to commit himself.

Just what *did* Father think? I would have given a great deal to know. Perhaps it was as well I did not. I might have resented it—that would have led to a family quarrel—which would have been a pity, for this was Commencement Day, the day I was graduated from college. A happy and a memorable day.

How much did Father know?

We were in the family carriage, five of us—Father and I in front, Mother, Brother Bill and Sister Ann on the back seat. And faithful old Nelly Bly pulled us. I think Bill had few illusions about the real merits of the occasion—we had discussed the affair too often. But Ann was not ashamed to

show how proud she was of her big brother—she leaned forward and kissed me smack on the ear. We were a happy little party that day—the day I “graduated”—as we drove back to our country home.

Graduated! What did it mean? How much was there in me?

I had illusions—very many. And I was happy—for surely now something worth-while must happen, though nothing to date had been really worth-while; and the whole of life was yet to be lived.

I felt that way. I sought not the prize; I only loved the race. Achievement meant little to me.

Even Father got excited when, just before turning into the lane that led to Maplegrove, we met old Mr. Norton, a friend of the family. We stopped. Father took my red-ribboned sheepskin from my hands, waved it at his friend, and shouted, “See that? Young’s diploma! Youngest boy in his class! Ain’t that fine! His oration won first prize.”

“Takes after his pa, eh?” was Mr. Norton’s parting shot as he shouted “giddap” to his old horse.

Did I take after my pa? or my ma? There were times when neither parent clamoured for that doubtful honour. And then one or the other would ask, “Where does he get it?” or, “Who the Sam Patch does that boy take after?” Nobody seemed to know.

Whom did I “take after”? and where *did* I get it?

My life . . . Do you know, as I rode home that Commencement Day, what puzzled me most?

Here I was, in the carriage with Father, Mother, Brother, Sister. On the platform at chapel that day was the President-preacher who had baptised me and blessed me, and nine other members of the college faculty. In the audience were boys I had played, studied, and gambled with, three girls I had made love to, four tradesmen to whom I owed money, Aunts, Uncles, and Cousins; and Helen Stratton. To no two of these was I the same individual.

To my surprise I found that, according to the person speaking, I was :

A Saint
A Devil
A Hypocrite
A Christian
A Good Fellow
A Gambler
A Liar
A Clown
A Hero
A Scholar
A Genius
A Fool
An Ass
An Angel

And I knew well enough that I was no one of these, but something of each—and something more. It wasn't so much what I was, as what I felt I had in me. Nor could I define that. I only knew that there was something within me—and that it would come out in its own good time.

I didn't want Helen Stratton to think me a Hero—or Mother to think me a Genius. Why couldn't people take me as I was? I just wanted to be a man.

I went up on the hill to take stock of myself, under the maples.

It seemed to me I was never twice quite the same. I was a chameleon, matching my colour to my environment. No; it wasn't quite that. I was not a chameleon. A chameleon to-day is a chameleon to-morrow.

What would I be to-morrow?

Perhaps you hardly realise how seriously we took these things. It is serious to be told one minute, as we were by the President: "Heritors of all the Ages, it is for you to lead Humanity onward to the Heights;" and the next: "How to

Do It,"—as that class was told by me. Don't smile. I couldn't help it. Our Class Orator was expected to do that thing.

What would I be to-morrow! Could I predict that from what had gone before? I did not know how impossible that would be.

Born; First Tooth; Weaned; Moved; Measles; Ran Away; School; Broke my nose; Fell in love—just milestones. By and in themselves, what do they explain? Are they not the normal, the expected things of life? But what of the explosions? What of the powder itself? And the fire? For, as our innate natures differ, and as our environment differs, so our reactions must differ.

Is life, after all, unending? As, up there on the hill, I looked back over my life, it seemed that no one event, no one episode stood by itself, or could be interpreted apart from that which had gone before. We are not chains of links, I concluded, but threads or wires; some very much alive, like wires, others very dead, like strings. Strike some, there is no rebound; the least touch upon others emits a spark.

I say: If you prefer to strike a string rather than a wire, let Young Low alone, and don't blame Young Low. His life began at the beginning of the world. Since his birth countless millions of influences have beaten upon him, to make him what he was—and what he is.

I was born on the Pike, near Markersburg, Ohio, in August, 1870. It cost Father three hundred dollars more than he had, Mother three months' distress—because she was not ready to "settle down"—and six months of suffering. It meant considerable anxiety for two Grandmothers, five Aunts, and all the women for miles around. But Father never complained, and Mother was soon reconciled.

Mother only remembers that when the time came Father took to the kitchen, where he blacked his shoes, washed his hands and face, shaved (cutting himself badly), and finally

appeared with his vest on wrong side out and his hair parted in the middle! and that she laughed!

I get my sense of humour from Mother.

How much of me that is now, was in that little red-faced, pug-nosed, pin-feathered thing that squirmed in a basket? Not much, probably. How much capacity I had for joy or pain, or innate ability to do and to be—even this, I do not know. I was “naturally” formed and the sympathetic critics agreed that I was to have a very fair skin, brown eyes, and soft brownish hair.

“Well, what shall we name him?”

I will not hope to interest you in the struggle that this question provoked in that little world. You see, they didn’t know what I was going to “turn into.” Mother favoured Clarence Harold. Father proposed John—that being a common name in the Low family. There was a compromise, and I was named Young—after my mother’s people.

Mother was a Fore-ordinationist. She knew that it was decided long ago what each mortal is to do in life. We used to argue about this. I maintained, childlike, that if God knew what I was to be, why should I struggle and strive? If it was that way, God would see to it that I neither disappointed nor deceived Him.

Whereupon Father would exclaim, “That boy worries me. He ain’t got a lick of reverence.”

And Mother would sigh, “What can you do with a boy like that?”

Many a heartache I caused those dear parents of mine. I knew it. I knew it all the time. They never let me forget it.

“Young,” Father used to say, “you’ll be sorry for this when I’m dead,” or, “When you see your dear Mother stretched out cold in her coffin, you’ll be sorry you disobeyed her.” I would admit it, and, no doubt often felt ashamed, and vowed, and, as I grew older, swore, that I would “do better.” I knew what was considered “better.” The hard part was to do it.

But too often, "doing better" only meant doing differently—contrary to the habitual.

I seemed to have been born into a world which neither wanted me as I was nor had any use for such natural talents as I possessed—in fact, it didn't try to find out just what talents I did possess. I was "licked," as Father called it, for whistling; and once sent supperless to bed because, high up on the house, I had given expression to the wild joy within by yelling at the top of my voice.

"What kind of an Injun are you, anyhow?" Father exclaimed. "Can't you behave? Can't you be decent? Ain't you ever going to be civilised?"

And so, from the start, they began to mould me, "Because," said Father, "the way the twig is bent, the tree inclines."

When I could just barely walk, I ran away from home. To hear Mother tell it, you'd have thought I went away on a train or a ship. I probably got twenty yards from the house. That must have seemed a long distance to me. I got tired and crawled home. I was handier on my belly than on my feet. Of course I tore my clothes, and I got very dirty. I thought I could mend matters by crawling into a rainwater barrel, where I nearly drowned.

I was punished for that. I recall nothing of the pain; it reacted on my temper. After I had smashed my third bottle, Mother decided that it was time to "wean the child." And so I parted with my best friend, the bottle, with its old black rubber nipple, and began sucking my thumb. It was harder to wean me from that than from the bottle.

By the time I was three, I had, no doubt, lost much of any natural talent I had had at birth, for the moulding process was well under way. True, I could walk and talk and wear clothes, and submit to being washed without too much fuss. I could play with a rag doll. In fact, Joe, the rag doll, marks the birth of my individuality. Joe introduced me to the world. Joe is my oldest, fondest recollection.

I wasn't baptised because my people didn't believe in that sort of thing for infants. Many will find it significant that Fate or Fury brought into my young hands a hammer and a tack. What more natural than to hit that tack with the hammer? But where make the experiment? Fate—or Fury—put the family Bible in my way. Mother thought it was Fury, for when I drove that tack into the thick board cover of the Bible, I committed a sin so sacrilegious, that nothing less than the combined prayers of the family could avail to lighten the offence in the eyes of my family's God.

I doubt whether the lesson Mother did her best to impart made much of an impression on my mind. I can't recall the details of the argument as they presented themselves to me, but it must have been something like this: Surely, a God so good as to have given his only Son to save us will not hoard it up against me, a poor, foolish little kid, because I drove a tack in the cover of the Holy Bible. It really didn't hurt the Bible. How then could it hurt God? He won't mind that. He will probably take it good-naturedly and smile, and say to himself: "I gave that boy the tack and the hammer, and I put in his right arm the impulse to work. If my Word is so fragile that a tack in the cover would injure it, I shouldn't have left it lying round where he could reach it." I think I must have thought it out that way. Even very little boys are apt to have a simple kind of logic that often transcends certain alleged wisdom of their parents.

"Besides," I protested, "it was probably foreordained that I do this very thing on this very day. Am I to blame?"

The Bible incident was not convincing. But there did occur, at about this time, something that impressed me profoundly. It had, perhaps, as much to do with a certain side of my nature as any other single event of my life. I managed to climb a few feet off the ground into a honeysuckle bush, where I had spied a bird's nest. I brought it down with me. I took a primitive delight in gloating over the four little blue eggs. But the frantic flutterings of the outraged mother, darting

back and forth and scolding me furiously, somehow took the edge off the joy of my first great adventure.

What to do with my booty did not long perplex me. I entered the house stealthily, and from among my playthings got a tiny iron frying-pan. I was in the act of scrambling eggs over a little fire when I was caught. Mother had become suspicious. She knew that I was "up to some devilment."

I don't know what made me suspect that it was wrong to rob a bird's nest, but I think my stealth suggests that I did. At any rate Mother painted the grief of the disconsolate mother-bird so vividly that I cried bitterly; nor was the lesson ever forgotten. My innate lust to kill was ended. True, a few years later I got the bird-egg-collection fever. Early one spring, my eyes discovered a nest high up in an elm tree. Temptation to measure myself against that tree, with the nest as a reward, was more than I could stand. What a nucleus for a collection a complete set of hawk's eggs would make! But I had no heart in the work; could take little joy in watching my collection grow; even had some contempt for boys who collected to sell or exchange. After a few weeks I gave up the whole nefarious business.

And now comes the supreme event of this period of my life, marking the passage from baby-monkey to boy-man. Our farm had never quite satisfied Father. It fell short of his ideal. Then, too, it was a rather lonely place, and Mother wanted more excitement. After much anxious considering, Father and Mother agreed to try out the West; and they did. I say they—I was taken along, of course. I recall only a single incident of that long journey, but that, I am certain, stirred me deeply and influenced my whole life. I stood between my parents on the suspension bridge at Cincinnati and watched the great white steamboats come and go up and down the river. And there, on that bridge, my imagination was fired with the craze for a knowledge of the Beyond. From that hour no prospect ever seemed wholly pleasing that did not imply at least mo-

tion, preferably a journey to unexplored lands or a new route to familiar scenes.

The loneliness of the Plains and the tireless wind, which never stilled, got on Mother's nerves. Mother didn't care to live in a country where she never dared put her clothes out on the line. It seems that the wind carried most of them away the first time she hung the "wash" out to dry. So we didn't stay out West.

We came back to Ohio and settled in Markersburg. For Father this was a big step—the responsibility for which, I think, must be charged to Mother.

Notice this: It was I who drove the tack into the Bible and robbed the bird's nest, and no one else is responsible. But a force beyond me set me down in Markersburg. That force is responsible for a great deal that happened to me while I lived there, and since.

Father bought a "general" store, where he "handled" about everything not sold at the drug store, the grocery store, and the postoffice. A complete directory of the business establishments of Markersburg would also include a grist-mill, a blacksmith's shop, and a saddler's. The saddler made and mended boots, too, and the blacksmith took care of leaks in spouts and was a horse doctor. We had a regular doctor, of course, who could pull teeth when necessary and shave corpses if old Fred Barclay, the barber, was sick. I suppose we had an undertaker. We must have had. We had an inn, and that inn had a saloon. And that is about all.

I became the best scholar and the worst boy in Markersburg. What would have happened if my people had stayed on the farm? Should I have grown into the best boy and the poorest scholar in the country? I don't know, because I realise now that I was at the mercy of most of the things that came along to mould me into the ways they vowed I should go, willy-nilly.

We considered ours an old family, for it had trudged over the hills from the East out of Virginia nearly a hundred years

ago. That seemed a long, long time. My ancestors never particularly interested me; I hardly think they would interest you. It is a harmless tradition that they once lived in France and went to England with the Normans. No doubt, for an appropriate fee, we could trace an unbroken line of descent from some English or French king. We have never felt like spending money that way. We were neither rich nor poor, just "God-fearing" farmer people—decently honest and soberly industrious. And such we probably should have continued to be, but Father left the country and moved to town.

CHAPTER II

THE PIKE—AND THE BEYOND

I LOVED our old Pike!

To be a child again, "just for to-night!" To steal out of the house and up through the grape arbour and climb the fence and be again upon that great world's highway, with the dust squishing up between my toes!

The Pike seemed to come straight out of the East and to go straight through to the West—from Everlasting to Everlasting. At one end of that Pike the sun came up; at the other, it went to bed. I know now that it was a very sorry highway, as world highways go. But to me there was something awe-inspiring about it—even about our milestones. They were real stones, much larger than I. I was a proud youngster when I could climb to the top of one of them. Hoary with age and grey-green in summer with lichens; they seemed so ancient! They must have stood there since the beginning of the world. And how imposing was that fine old fellow in front of our house with the deep clear-cut inscription:

COLUMBUS 21 MILES

CUMBERLAND 236 MILES

Oh, that lent distinction to our house—that milestone! I wonder how much I owe to that stone.

Columbus was our State capital—far away, great, typical of things dreamed of but not yet realised. I had never been there, but Father's business took him there twice a year. And he always brought something home from that wondrous city!

The memories of that old Pike!

Promptly at eight o'clock each night that great monster, that

supreme miracle, the Concord coach, would come swaying and swinging and rumbling in. Billy, the grizzled, gnarled old driver—I can see Billy now check his four horses in front of the postoffice, put up his long lashed whip and climb down from his lofty box, in winter muffled to his eyes in a great fur coat and the flaps of his coonskin cap pulled down over his ears.

Billy and his coach hitched us up with the world beyond. They brought us newspapers, and now and then a letter from that great city far away “up” the Pike. And in the long winter evenings, the old men of the town would gather round Father’s big red-hot stove and spit tobacco juice in the sawdust box, while Father read them news of kings and of catastrophes, of shipwrecks and of war. I used to beg to be one of this intimate little band, it made me feel big. I, too, loved to hear of shipwrecks and of wars. But all too often the coming of the stage was my curfew—its arrival marked my last minute of freedom.

“Bedtime, my boy,” Father would say, patting me on the head.

“Can’t I . . .”

“No, not another minute. It is your duty to go home to your Mother.”

And with an “Aw shoot, Pa!” I would scoot home to my trundle-bed.

I heard much of “duty” those days. I little suspected I had any rights.

At the edge of town was a massive covered bridge—built when oak was plentiful, and honest work the rule. When the old stage rolled through that bridge the earth itself seemed to rumble. Far down beneath was the “crick.” Possibly there were larger streams in the world, and possibly larger bridges, but they existed only in the pages of books and for us could not be real. We knew our own bridge, and we loved it, and though we feared its gloom at night, we revelled in its lofty

rafters by day and from its size and strength got inspiration.

Beyond The Bridge was the mysterious Coffee Tree. We greatly prized its hard, glossy beans as pocket pieces. The shinier a bean had been worn by much handling, the greater its value as a "lucky-stone." We would as soon have ventured to part with the little sack of asafetida that hung from our necks, to keep us from catching smallpox. Not that there ever was a case of smallpox in Markersburg. "But," Mother used to say, "you never can tell when it will come; an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure."

The Coffee Tree marked the limit of my travels afoot toward the east. It was the dead-line beyond which I had been warned not to pass. But, on Sundays—ah, that was different; not every Sunday, but every third Sunday in the month—that was the day of the "Big-Meetun" at Hog Run. On those days our little family would be up bright and early. I would go with Father to the barn, to help curry old Nelly. At any rate, Father said I helped, and that was just the same to me. Nelly, strong as an ox, tender-hearted as a dove, was the family horse. Load the old family carriage up, it made no difference to her—she trotted right along. If you put a mite of a boy on her back and he tumbled off, she wouldn't step on his toes, not Nelly.

"She's got more sense than a lot of people I know," Father declared.

"Yes, and a better disposition, too," added Mother.

At last we are all in and off. Down the Pike we go, rumbling through The Bridge, past The Tree, and on and on. At last we come to the toll-gate.

"Goin' to Meetun, Uncle Joe," Father would sing out in his best Sunday unction.

"All right, Mr. Low," Uncle Joe would reply, with equal unction. No toll on the Pike on Sunday. On and on for many a mile through a rich, smiling, peaceful country—its soil black, its people well-to-do, happy, ignorant, sordid, contented. On

hot days we would draw up under the shade of an old oak or walnut, and give Nelly a chance to puff. For a few miles our road followed the old canal—the “Raging Canal,” as Father always called it. Eventful were the days when we passed a canal boat! How I envied those barefoot heroes who, from vantage ground of deck, flaunted their scorn at me, poor land-lubber bound to the Pike.

Then we would leave the Pike, to take the Dog-Leg road, and for a mile our way lay through a dark forest—full of mystery and charm. It seemed endless. I could conceive of nothing beyond. Above the lofty tree-tops soared hawks. From the limbs, crows mocked us. And on rare occasions we would spy an eagle! Then we went through a dark ravine and crossed a brook which hurried on into the forest to lose itself in masses of fern and briar and come out again—where?

We did certain things at certain places. At one place Father always watered Nelly. At another, he would make me a wil-low whistle. At another, he would bring up heaping handfuls of blackberries. At another, he would gather chickweed for Mother’s canary.

At last came the Big Hill—that always made Nelly pant and puff and want to stop and rest. But Father would say, “Come along, old girl—nearly there now.” Nelly knew what that meant. So up and over we would go, and down into a sweet grove of maple.

There was the little white Meeting House, chaste, proper, and Godly. Its benches were so hard and stiff that my scheming mind soon devised a way to escape the torture of a two or three hours’ sermon. I discovered that an attack of fidgets excited Mother’s compassion—and I would get my release. Then I would steal round back of the church and climb the fence into the graveyard, a dear old place. There were thin, gaunt marble slabs, weather-stained and lichen-covered, marking the graves of my forebears, for the Meeting House was the place of worship of generations of Lows.

But it wasn’t tombstones that delighted me; no, not half so

much as the chance to get off the heavy copper-toed shoes that suffocated my feet and tortured my soul. How delicious to bare feet were the thick grass, the soft beds of clover, the banks of myrtle! Nothing could be more delicious, unless, maybe, the squish of mud between one's toes on a hot, rainy day. The graveyard was still and peaceful—in such contrast to the interior of the little Meeting House, where Brother Sutton rumbled up the air with his arms and one's peace of mind with his sing-song sermon. The graveyard was a bit of nature. Bees sought its sweet-williams, flashing orioles swung their nests from the outermost boughs of maples, and a robin red-breast, a turtle dove, and a peewee had made homes in a wild apple tree, in the corner.

The sermon over, came greetings, a handshake among the men, an embrace and a kiss among the women. And we would start for Grandpap's place. Yes, that was best of all. How proud I was to sit on the front seat of Grandfather's carriage! The mile-long lane carried us through another silent wood, then opened out suddenly upon a big pond where ducks and geese were playing. On one side were old bank-barns; on the other, the house itself. Red brick, green shutters, and great white doors, set amidst pines and silverleaf; a veritable mansion.

Some of my recollections of this old place deal with the austerity of Grandfather, the mystery of the log fire in the wide fireplace in the big living room, and the awesome gloom of the big forest on a high hill behind the house. It is not so much the forest itself I remember, as the silhouettes the black wood made at dusk against the sky. There I could make out all the wild animals I had heard about or seen pictured in storybooks, and other monsters created out of my imagination.

Then there was the æolian harp Uncle John used to fix for me on the window frame. How its waxed silk thread would sing in winter, robbing the wind of its gentle music! And the stories Uncle John used to tell of the days when he fought Indians and hunted buffalo in the far West! I used to listen,

open-mouthed and wide-eyed, stretched out the while on a grizzly-bear skin, visualising his stories in the fire of hickory logs that sputtered and hissed and snapped and fussed.

But the crowning event, down at this grand old place of boyhood days, was the fox hunt. Then there *was* excitement. Uncle John owned the finest pack of hounds in the State, and the "swells" used to ride in from Colbran early in the morning of the day of the hunt, and the hounds would be beside themselves with joy, barking furiously and tugging at their chains. I can see myself now, with nose flattened against the window-pane, watching the start. But the climax came—sometimes early, sometimes late in the day—when I could hear the baying of the hounds up in the woods and the yelp of the fox.

Many other fond recollections have I of that beloved old place, too soon to be taken out of my life. There was the brick springhouse, a two-story affair. At its side, clear, cold water bubbled up clean and sweet from beneath a gnarled beech-tree, to find its way through stone troughs into the lower rooms where it cooled many crocks of milk. Overhead lived an old crone who took care of the milk—and a little granddaughter, Mag, by looks distant, by disposition near, kin to a Capuchin monkey. Mag was wise beyond her years. Where she got her wisdom, heaven only knows. But it was this little Mag that first taught me that there are differences between boys and girls other than playthings, length of hair, and cut of costume. But I was too young to take advantage of Mag's wisdom, though she more than once encouraged me to try.

Quite likely, I ate more than was good for me at Grandfather's. I remember a sharp reprimand one Sunday when we had the Preacher for dinner. I was eating a pork chop—as happy as I was ignorant of offence—when from the head of the table, in a deep sonorous voice, came the command, "Young, stop snortin'." Mother was humiliated, because her son had been reprimanded in the presence of the Preacher

and because I had not yet "learned to eat like a civilised being."

Boyhood dreams seem to centre about a little room where I slept at Grandfather's. It was just off the kitchen, warmed from the back of the big stone chimney. My dreams were mostly nightmares that made me cry out and waken the whole house. Once I dreamed I was seated in my little red chair—from the old home in Virginia, and before from across the big water—barefooted, of course, when a monstrous snapping turtle, much larger than any of those I had seen sunning on logs in the canal, had hold of one of my toes, and was pulling it off. Another night I was being scalped by Indians, my hands and feet tied to a stake with faggots piled round me waist-high, ready for the lighted torch. Uncle John was a very vivid storyteller.

Yes, those early dreams were mostly hideous. They were born of an overburdened stomach and a mind oversensitised by lurid tales of ghosts and goblins, bad-men and "booggers." Later, in youth, the nature of my dreams changed—became tinged with things frankly sexual. My mind, freed of inhibitions, was animated by wishes and desires that in waking hours must be suppressed. Even yet my mind in sleep digs up bits of this unconscious legacy of childhood. Desires repressed then so effectually that they form no part of my consciousness and hence no part of my memory, come forth out of this early fund of wishes and find their way to fulfilment by the dreamland route.

Rain or shine, snow or summer, the Old Home was my other home, dearer to me than any home before or since. Each month, each season, yielded its treasures. Christmas, with its gaily-laden tree, in the parlour, of course, was a treat. The days before Easter when we used to scour the barn for eggs and hide them, then to bring them in in pails on Easter morning; these, too, were happy days. But when the sap climbed the maples and we sugared off—that was heavenly. My jaws twitch now recalling the day when I got a lump of sugar fast in my mouth and couldn't get it out. Mother feared I would

die of "lockjaw." But more serious was the time when I got a bean up my nose and it swelled and swelled and wouldn't come out, and they had to send for the doctor.

Maple times were real times. What dearer odour to a boy than that which comes from the great kettle as the sap begins to thicken, and you can fairly taste the warm, waxy sugar in your mouth! We made sugar cakes of every conceivable size and shape. Uncle John used to tax his ingenuity whittling out new forms for moulds into which to pour the syrup. I liked best to "blow" the biggest goose egg I could find and fill it with sugar. Mother approved of this because I couldn't get the whole thing in my mouth at once.

As the Pike led from my real home to the home I really loved, so it led back again. Days at Grandfather's were probably not so numerous as they seemed to me, but my impressions of the fox-hunts, the sugarings-off, the haying parties, the horse-races, the dark wood with its menagerie and whip-poorwills and owls—peopled in my imagination with breech-cloth-clad Indians on tiptoe brandishing tomahawks and hunting little boys to scalp—all these were real.

How little then I appreciated the loving kindness of Grandfather and Grandmother—that dear old white-haired gentlewoman who never reproached me when I ate her dried cherries, or when I got in her way while she made candles, and who always saw to it that I got my favourite pieces of chicken—heart, liver, gizzard, and at least two drum-sticks! Or what can I say of the half sisterly, half motherly care which those two dear aunts took of me; or of the jovial, gentle, manly uncles who shared their joys with me! I fear they were too good to me.

How old-fashioned, it seems, nowadays, to be just good, and simple, loving, kind and contented!

Centennial year came. I was only six, but I remember it vividly—the year I started to school! The United States was one hundred years old!

Everybody's mind and many feet turned Philadelphiaward. Our Pike was a real thoroughfare. Young and old soldiers marched by. The stirring music of their fifes and drums made our hearts beat faster and our faces flush. Now and then a covered wagon drawn by jaded, bony horses came along, bound East. Scrawled on the dirty white canvas of one was: "KAN-SAS NO GOOD."

"They are coming back," Mother explained. "They have been out to Kansas; they are coming back to grand old Ohio."

Another day brought us a strange old patriarch, who still wore his soldier-clothes and the medals he had won in the war. He pushed a curious covered wheelbarrow. We never knew what he had inside, but he and his odd vehicle roused a deal of comment in the town.

Mother urged Father to go. I added my approval. I already appreciated Father's qualities. I felt that something about him set him apart from other men in Markersburg. Mother couldn't go because she couldn't leave her two children. Father did not go to Philadelphia—of course. He never went anywhere alone. Mother made him so conscious of his need of her. He did not know that she did this. Of course Father didn't go. He declared he would not even think of it. Did he? But the fact that we had considered him worthy of this great thing established his reputation in my mind. No other man in town was worthy.

I mentally capitalised all this—and began a social career. Markersburg boys were of two castes: myself—other boys. I couldn't help it; it wasn't their fault. It simply was that way. I didn't feel unduly proud. But it helped, this consciousness of my superior social position. Mother seemed to feel it a little, too. She would not say, "Now, Young, don't play with this boy or that boy," but, "Young, don't play with those boys."

In spite of parental vigilance I more and more often eluded the curfew. I associated more and more with "bad" boys.

Tradition records a fight between Indians and whites near Markersburg; so much blood was spilled that the little stream ran red—hence its name, Bloody Run. To us it was “The Crick”—divided into three parts.

First was the millrace. The mill was only a skeleton, even in my day. Few of the hand-made, weather-stained oak shingles remained. Loose boards flapped in the wind. But its substantial beams and rafters were still weathering winter’s storms.

We were afraid of the old mill. A man once hanged himself there! At night we could hear him moan and sigh. We didn’t believe in ghosts; but we were afraid of them—even though McGuffey’s Second Reader told us ghost stories to prove there are no ghosts. Strange sounds and sights at night gave us the creeps. There wasn’t a boy in town who had nerve enough to go into the mill at night. Our innate fear of the unknown was not lessened by certain things our parents used to say to us—“The ‘Gobbelluns’ ’ill get you if you don’t do this,” or “The Badman ’ill get you if you don’t do that.”

The millrace was full of fish, but they were suckers and nobody cared for them. The lazy and the idle fished just for the sheer delight of baiting a hook, seeing the cork bob up and down, and feeling the backbone thrill and stiffen as the cork shot beneath the water, while they yanked away on a pawpaw pole. The owner of a bamboo pole was a marked man—a professional.

The second stretch of Bloody Run was the trysting ground. We played lap-jack there—in spring when the willows are full of pussies. Saturday mornings was the understood time—as soon after breakfast as our skinny legs would carry us. We cut and peeled the longest and straightest rods we could find—to make ’em “bite better.” Then we paired off—Eyebrows Stubbs, “fer ninstance,” with Toad Tanners. They faced each other, just far enough apart to reach each other’s legs with the rods. They began; gently at first, “feeling each

other out." Then the blows got a little heavier. When Eyebrows' lap-jack raised a red welt on Toad's bare leg, prudence was chucked overboard, and Toad and Eyebrows went at each other in deadly earnest. The contest terminated when Eyebrows' or Toad's lap-jack was in shreds. It was no fair fighting with fists; or calling names. Any boy that didn't play fair couldn't belong to the gang.

But the best of Bloody Run was the broad deep stretch between high banks lined with giant sycamore and elm. In decayed trunks owls made their home, orioles' hammocks overhung the water, flickers cluttered the air, kingfishers looked wise, swallows shot the banks full of holes, and back on drift-sand curlews built their rude nests. This was our swimming place, the beloved "Mud Hole."

Here I learned to swim. But in learning I became a notorious liar and an inveterate truant. I developed a fertile imagination, vast cunning, and new ways of drying my hair. You see, Father never learned to swim. He was afraid of the water. The sight of a gang-plank gave him nausea and the smell of tarred rope made him seasick. Naturally timid, and having only two sons, he felt he could take no chances. The Mud Hole was forbidden me. If x equals the number of personal encounters between Father and me, between my sixth and tenth year, $\frac{x}{2}$ equals the trouble that may be charged to the Mud Hole.

Lock a boy in the back-room of a store to keep him from going swimming! And on a Saturday, in August! I ate brown sugar sandwiches till I wearied. Then I pried a window open and jumped. I lit on a broken lamp-glass, and one foot left a trail of blood from the alley to the Mud Hole. The trip home was just as painful, for Father hunted me out and licked me all the way back.

I nearly drowned that day. I went down the "third time." But it did not lessen my love of the Mud Hole.

"Of course a feller couldn't git drowned down there in that Mud Hole," I explained to Father. "Isn't old Jack Harker there? Would he let a feller drown?"

Jack was a man, and the friend of every boy in Markersburg. We loved Jack and pitied him, too. He had fought in China and in Africa; and in the Battle of Bull Run had let the end of a gun-carriage slip from his hands, maiming him for life. But he could swim like a duck, and could tell stories better than any picture book.

I don't know what-all the Mud Hole brought out of us; probably more than it washed from us—and that was not inconsiderable. There was something about that Mud Hole—I don't imagine for a moment it was unique—that seemed to bring out what father called "the Old Harry" in us. Down there in the shade of the sycamore, with our clothes in heaps—or in knots, and often soaked—we were as we were born—savages, naked and unashamed. There was nothing we could think of too mean to do; no trick we could play on each other too despicable to be tried out at once. Our language would have reddened the cheeks of a gorilla, for, with Jack away, we told stories, but not Jack's kind. They were short and pithy and filthy. We had a word that fitted our case, a word we were fond of and used often—"ornery." Mother used to declare that her whole week's efforts at civilisation were wiped out by one hour at the Mud Hole. But it was great fun and we were always a happy though tired lot, as we would streak back home, hopping along on one foot to get the water out of our ears.

I celebrated my seventh birthday by running away! Father had gone to Columbus. Mother was not well. After breakfast she sent me to the store for baking powder. It was Saturday—cookery-baking day. I tore down to the store and back. Just outside our door I heard a locomotive whistle, far away. I had heard it many a time. I knew what it

meant. But on this day it called me as never before. It was a challenge.

I sneaked into the house by the back door, put the can on the kitchen table, and got out without Mother's knowing it. I started straight for the whistle—three long miles to Outville station.

I exulted with an immense pride. It wasn't because I had run away. I preferred not to think of that just then. It would have brought other thoughts—for example, what would happen when I got home? No, it wasn't that. It was pure elation.

Outville was insignificant; just a village—of no earthly interest to me. That made it all the better—I wanted to see the cars! The track, used by two trunk lines, was a busy one. As regularly as the ticking of a clock, it seemed, trains rumbled by. First would come a long passenger train, rushing through from Toyland to Fairyland, or from the Great Mystery to the Far Unknown. Should I ever get to ride on one? Maybe. But I hardly dared to hope I should ever travel in one of those Pullman Palace Sleeping Cars!

Away up round the bend I could see the steam before I heard the shrill whistle of a freight train. Even before I could see the monstrous black engine I could hear its terrible roar and feel the earth quake. Flat on my belly, an ear glued to the rail and my eyes straining up the track, I would lie and listen; and think wild things and feel big stirrings within me. On it would come; nearer; nearer—my whole body vibrating to the tune of its thundering. And I would scamper back to the top of the rail fence—to gloat as it sizzled by. Some of those trains seemed as long as our Pike. I tried to count the cars. I always stuck at sixteen, couldn't remember what came next. While trying to think it up, I would lose the count. Then I would try to make out the blurred letters on the cars. I felt very happy when I discovered that, by looking up the track and focussing my eyes on

a certain car and turning my head as it moved toward me, I could decipher some of those cabalistic signs.

I gained courage. No one was watching. So I sneaked up the track and, with many a furtive glance, climbed on top of one of three box cars on a siding. That short climb aged me, strengthened me, and broadened my horizon. I sat still a while to let my newly found courage strike in. Then I crept along to the other end of the car; fooled with the brake; and stood still. Nothing happened. The heavens didn't fall; no dog barked; no gruff man insulted my manhood by bawling out, "Kid, come down offen there."

The village, a quarter of a mile away, slept on. The heat quivered above the stubble fields. The shining rails glistened and gleamed in the noonday sun.

Could I get over to the next car? I measured the gulf with my stride. I thought I could. I did it. My bare feet needed no seven-leagued boots. I explored that car; and the next one. I returned to my first love. I decided I could do all three of them; I ran the length of the three cars, jumping over the two yawning caverns.

Satiated here, I climbed down and looked about for new worlds to conquer. The wheels looked attractive. I crawled under the cars from side to side, back and forth; and tried the brakes. And again I tired of my conquests.

The August sun never relented. I looked into a car that was half full of wheat. It was shady there and looked cool. The invitation was insistent. Could I make it? I couldn't from the ground. So I climbed on top of the car and fell in. The cool and the fragrance of the wheat were enchanting. I lay down on my back, buried my bare legs and burrowed my bare arms in the cool grain, first having chewed enough wheat to make a good mouthful of "wax."

How long I slept, I do not know. But the bump, bump, of my cool couch startled me to my senses, and I realised that I was not only a runaway, but bound, against my will, on a journey. For we certainly were moving. I could see tele-

graph poles move by, slowly, then faster, till at last they seemed fence posts. A red brick schoolhouse shot by, and I knew I was bound for Colbran, our county seat.

Only a run of thirty minutes; but thirty hours' alternate bliss and torture to me. My crime loomed large. Father was probably frantic over the loss of his son, and Mother—I refused to let myself think of that.

Of that memorable ride I take credit for one thing only. I had sense to know that neither shouting nor butting against the walls could help the situation. At last I saw towering chimneys. We were nearing the town. I heard the "down-brakes" whistle. The train stopped for water, near the station. I heard feet overhead; and I yelled. A man exclaimed, "Watth'ell. . . ." Then came the rescue. My courage began to revive.

Practice had enabled me to inhibit certain things. I could put away from me the picture of what would happen when I got home. I was a traveller—had made a trip by rail! I exulted—as one does over the conscious realisation of a new and unexpected power.

With a straight face and a dry eye I told my story to the station-master. He turned me over to the station policeman, who gave me to the town marshal. He drove me home, fourteen miles.

By the side of Mother's bed I told the whole story. Nothing happened. She laughed; and cried. Then she and I came to a decision. We were never, never, never to tell Father anything about it. Mother feared the consequences fully as much as I. Second lesson that day. If it was all right for Mother to fool Father about such an important matter it surely couldn't be so very wicked for me to give him the slip now and then.

By this time I had become a skilled liar and a successful hypocrite. I could be as good in Sunday-school as I was ornery at the Mud Hole. And one gave me about as much satisfaction as the other. I had learned to adapt myself to my environment. I was becoming moulded. The veneer of

civilisation was thickening. My skin was hardening. I hadn't found very many people I couldn't fool, one way or another, except the boys, of course. There was no need to fool them. One could be one's real self to them.

CHAPTER III

THE BAREFOOT ORNERY GANG

I HAD reached the heterogeneous age. Everything mattered; nothing counted. The world of sensations had opened out anew and all of a sudden, it seemed. There was everything to be done; not time enough for any one thing. The broadened vision was too distracting, nor was I yet out of the habit of being narrowly intensive in thought and action.

Father and Mother noticed the difference and complained that they couldn't "make me out." I couldn't either. I was no longer a child. It was years since Father had given up dressing me in the morning. I could get into my own clothes now. I was a full-fledged member of the barefoot ornery gang.

I think Father grieved when he lost his baby. He never understood me. While I was a child he could handle me and was always more or less master of the situation. I think he was sorry when he no longer needed to call down to Mother, getting breakfast in the kitchen, "Behind or before, Old Joe?" That was his way of asking Mother whether I buttoned up in front or behind. It was one of Father's little pleasantries to pretend that he could never remember whether I walked or backed into my clothes.

Gone, too, were the days when he used to hurry home from the store to take me in his arms and rock me to sleep, crooning softly:

"Little birdie, little birdie,
Come live with me."

I have forgotten how the rest goes, but it had to do with "red ripe cheeries all wet with dew."

No; that intimate relationship between father and child was gone. True, after long years there came a new kind of relationship—something fine and clean which lasted till the end. I sought deliberately to re-establish myself in his affections. I let him see only the side of me that he wanted to see. I played the game with him according to rules he approved of. I felt I owed him at least that much for the sacrifices he thought he had made for me during those earlier years of misunderstanding—the years when everything was expected of me, but little given that was of use to me.

Father and I drifted apart. He was content to let admonition, reproof, aphorisms and corporal punishment take the place of understanding and sympathy. He gradually froze up—he rarely unfroze; I gave him little opportunity.

Mother, of course, was busy with our baby, for when I was four, a little brother came, William. Little Bill I called him.

Why was Mother ashamed to be seen during the two months before Brother Bill was born? I could not understand why. Was child-bearing immoral, or only immodest?

I couldn't have much love for Little Billy. I was frankly told that my nose was out of joint; and it was.

Bill's arrival hastened development in certain directions. I was allowed to shift for myself as I had never done before. I didn't like to push Billy around in a buggy. I had to be bribed to do it. Later I was bribed to "practise" on the piano. I never fancied either job, and Mother soon left off trying to make of me a nurse girl and a musician.

I am fond of music, very, and fond of children. All my life I have whistled and sung. It was in me and would come out. One afternoon, walking home from the store, I was whistling for dear life. The old druggist, dozing beneath a locust tree in front of his store, tried to bawl me out by shouting, "Shut up, you Brat!" It never feazed me. I was only conscious of pride that I could whistle loudly enough to annoy people. I was coming on!

These years that I am thinking about, seven and eight and

nine, were jolly years. Yet, in a way, they were wayward. I matured early and ran to seed. I did things that seemed to profit me nothing. I realise now that I was vicious. I was at the vicious age. Nothing counted much except my own sweet will and, daily and hourly, that sweet will ran counter to Markersburg's stolid standards.

I don't pretend that mine was a unique experience. I think I thought it was at the time. I wasn't of any account to anybody. Father would sigh, "What is that boy coming to?" And though Mother would shake her head and wonder and wonder if I would ever be good for anything, I believe she never quite lost confidence in me. That, and the generous affection of my aunts, who glorified even my faults because I was their first nephew, only intensified my certainty that I was to be a wonder-working man.

Meanwhile, I was a boy of eight, adrift, and proud of it.

Ours was not an unpleasant home. It was cosy enough. The table was bounteous, none better in the village. No better feather bed or straw tick in town than mine. Nor did any boy have for himself a larger room. But I wasn't born to live in a house; at any rate, not in the summer time.

Father worked harder and harder at the store, and stayed later and later, and Mother was never idle. She rattled away at a sewing machine hours at a stretch, and baked and swept, and pounded the beefsteak and floured it and fried it, and was a good soul generally, almost always bright and cheery.

Father was taciturn, not quite sombre, and rather melancholy—but not in a sour sort of way. I could never think of Father as having been a boy, or even a young man. He must have been born grown up. If his heart hadn't been so tender, he would have been austere. His was of finer fibre than most men in the town were made of. He was intellectually their superior. He felt it; they knew it; but he was so modest that he was bashful. He was never aggressive, never took a chance, never made a questionable dollar in his life.

He had had no boyhood; had never played. He belonged to

the pioneering days when boys earned their salt—got up at four and did three hours' chores before they were ready to start to school, at seven. We are young because we play—and as long as we play. He never drifted because he was never adrift. His predatory instincts were worn out on the plough and the axe-handle. Like pig-iron he had been poured into a mould and left there to harden.

I can't conceive of Father as a young man flirting with a girl, or as a married man being aware of the existence of any woman in the world other than Mother. Even as a youngster I recognised in him something which distinguished him from other men. He was the cleanest and the decentest man I have ever known. His timidity was practically offset by Mother's aggressiveness. She was ambitious for me, for Billy, for Father, for herself, for all of her friends. And very, very busy all the time.

I took the bit and ran away. Father had little time for me. I think he even begrudged the time it took to thrash me when I disobeyed. He pitied me—he used to tell me so very often. But it seemed to me then, and I have since had no reason to think otherwise, that he could not put himself in my place. And I pitied him—for pity is double-faced.

We didn't exactly become estranged. I simply followed the line of least resistance—I deceived him, or failed in the attempt. In Mother I always had a haven of refuge. Many a time she averted the lash. I knew this, of course.

There are things to buy even in a small town, even for a small boy. Our store supplied most of my wants, but there were certain youthful commodities that Father didn't handle—jack-stones and marbles, for instance. It took money to get them. It was useless to beg Father for nickels, or even pennies. With Mother I was more successful. Many and many an encounter have we had—where it has been simply one will opposed to another. I won out too frequently, I fear,

for my good. The conversation on these occasions would usually be thus:

"Maw, I want a nickel."

"What for, Young?"

"Get some marbles."

"Paw says you got enough marbles now."

"No, I ain't, Maw. Can't I have a nickel? I ain't got half as many marbles as Toad Tanners. Even Eyebrows' got more'n twict 'smany's I got."

The duel would continue:

"Kinna, Maw—Maw, kinna?"

"No, Young."

"Kinna, Maw—Maw, kinna?"

"No, Young; stop teasing your mother."

And so it would go on until the barriers of a strong mother nature were broken down and she would yield.

Perhaps the coin might not at the time be available. Perhaps her will would triumph over mine. Once I left the house desperate and resentful, and asked the first man I met on the street for a nickel.

The look he gave me cut me to the quick. I slunk away mortified and ashamed. But I would have that nickel. I crept into the store desperate, determined to take a dime from the till, when no one was looking. I knew that it would be stealing—but I had to have more marbles. For days there had been festering in my brain a scheme suggested by that of the man at the County Fair who sells three rings for a dime. You ring canes for prizes—jack-knives, razors, key-rings, watch-charms, cigar-holders, the cane itself, perhaps a silver half-dollar. Then—it seemed providential—Uncle John entered the store and I wheedled a dime from him.

To the grocery store, where I bought ten cents' worth of their cheapest marbles. Back home, to the woodshed. I hunted up a soap-box and drove eight-penny nails at regular intervals, part way into one end of it. Then I hurried to the

meeting place of the barefoot ornery gang, and spread my net.

"Three rings fer fi' marbles, an' fer ever' nail yuh ring yuh git fi' marbles."

"Boss day for suckers," was Hart Simmons' comment. The boys bit and bit again; and scrapped for turns at the game of fortune. Quite unintentionally I had driven the nails so close together that it was almost impossible for the celluloid rings I had "borrowed" from the carriage harness to settle down over a nail, even if they fell right. Further, the rings were so light they jumped away as soon as they struck the board.

By night I had "cleaned" the town. There wasn't a marble to be had at the grocery store. Every boy in town was busted. I was the pirate king of a pirate crew; they had paid tribute. I could have led that subdued gang to war. Incidentally, I had only confirmed what I had felt all along—that put to the supreme test, I had it just a little over any boy in town.

Father simply couldn't see it that way. More in sorrow than in anger he smashed my magic board and made me pay back every marble I had won. I was just a common gambler, and on a greased hill bound for the bottomless pit.

I didn't feel that way about it.

Every year or two a circus came to town. They pitched their tents in Father's pasture—a sweet field of blue-grass between our garden and Bloody Run. That meant the choicest posters on our stable, the best seats in the big tent for the whole Low family, and finer than all that, Special Privilege for me. I was a tolerated nuisance behind the scenes, while the tents were being put up, the wagons unloaded, and the parade forming. My open sesame was, "My paw owns this yere field. You drive me away and I'll make him take yer durned show offayere."

The circus left a trail of anguish and ambition—I mean among us boys. It was a big thing for us. It stimulated our

imagination—took us out of our stupid, ignorant selves—gave us visions. For days after, we haunted the meadow. The sawdust was still in the ring! We ran, and jumped, and tumbled; and talked it all over, and over again. We imagined ourselves sailing through the air on a trapeze, or setting the crowd aroar with our clownish jokes, or, best of all, riding a horse bareback, holding a spangled fairy in crimson crinoline. For at least two years of my life I wanted more than anything else in the world to be a clown in a real circus that travelled in wagons and had elephants, and lions, and tigers, and lady bareback-riders!

Of course we played circus. Six of us: Toad Tanners, Eyebrows Williams, Freckles Turner, Stubby Pilp and Pippis Simmons. The stage was the closed-in end of a grape-arbour that ran the whole length of our lot from Pike to alley. Admission—ten pins. My best stunt was a trick the side-show-man had taught me—the eating of a Burning Candle. The candle, of course, was of potato, the wick an almond whittled round and slender. It was the last act of the day because it would be more effective at twilight. The trick was a success and the scar on my tongue is permanent.

We sold home-made popcorn balls and bags of parched maize and cleared thirty-two cents in money and more pins than we could possibly use.

If it wasn't one thing it was another. But it all had to do with restlessness, the love of doing something new. We wanted to kick over the traces, as Father always put it. We played one old-cat and two old-cat, ante-over, leap-frog, crack-the-whip, and mumbly-peg; and woe to the boy who had to pull the peg with his teeth. In a corner of the old worm fence behind the schoolhouse new boys were initiated into the mysteries of Pewemoruvit. If they knew that, we taught them Lame Soldier.

We fought but little. We understood each other. Among ourselves our temper rarely got the better of us. Snuff Doolittle one Fourth fired a cracker just behind my ear, doing

some injury to my person and more to my dignity. It would have been all right if he had pulled off one of my ears in a fair fight. But he had sneaked up behind me! I grabbed the first thing I could get my hands on, a piece of brick, and shot it at him. It was all over in an instant. I didn't really mean to hurt him. The scar that brick made may be seen to-day on the nose of a convict in the Ohio State penitentiary, for Snuff finally went clear wrong.

I never cared much for winter. "Dog days," that the old people dreaded so much, were what I liked. My sled, to be sure, was as good as any boy's in town, for it came from the loving hands of a carriage-building uncle, and it was made for all time. But I never liked winter, rarely getting through one without a long sickness—mumps, measles, scarlet-fever, lung fever, or just plain sick.

One very cold day when the Pike was perfect for sleighing, a thoughtless, well-meaning friend of ours lined us up behind his gay cutter. Never had Markersburg seen such a long line of bobsleds stretching out behind a sleigh. Off we went behind two high-stepping horses, the sleigh bells jingling merrily. For five miles we skimmed the hard white way clear to Canalport, and back again. Almost every boy in the crowd had frosted toes or fingers or ears.

A few days later diphtheria laid its hand on us and spread from house to house. School broke up. Father and Mother tried hard to isolate me. But at last my turn came. Day after day I was delirious. Never before had I enjoyed such dreams. They were filled with the subtle imagery of toxin. The vagaries of my mind were innumerable.

Thus I lay for a whole week. Every day the old bell, from the little white meeting-house, announced the funeral of a playmate. Then we would sharpen our ears to count the strokes tolled slowly, solemnly—one stroke for each year of age; one, two, three, four, five, six, seven—and Mother would say, "I wonder if that's Toad Tanners, or Gracie Simmons."

The crisis for me had come. My playmates were either

dead or were on the mend. Old Dr. Hancock, though tired out from his constant rounds, had decided to watch me through the night. Father and Mother were worn out and had dropped asleep. At two o'clock Dr. Hancock called Father.

"He may live an hour," he said; "possibly longer, probably less."

Father stayed with me to fight it out with death. I can see Father now sitting there by my cot, my hand between his:

"If he gets well, never again will I thrash my little boy!"

And I resolved, never again will I disobey my father.

And he talked brokenly of many things that had happened in my small past; he would not be unjust again. All the while my breath came harder and harder.

Then Father got down the family Bible, opened it on his knees, and tried to read. The words wouldn't come; and tears rolled down his cheeks.

I saw into my father's heart. He wanted me to live. That thought seemed to give new energy to my exhausted body. For hours I had been lying motionless, gasping for breath. I hadn't strength enough to cry. But now the tears came, and sobbing. Soon Father saw a change. Something had broken. But it was months before I could talk or walk.

Father and I didn't keep our vows. I relapsed into viciousness. He returned to the cherry tree for the customary corrective. Did school help any? I am afraid not. But I really liked to go to school. Our schoolhouse was the biggest building in town, bigger than any church. Quite right and proper, for we had three churches, but only one school. Two stories, and two rooms on each floor. One upper room was the town-hall. Our school entertainments were given there. Lodge met in the other room. The ground floor was our school, the Little and the Big Room, though they were of the same size.

I was unfortunate in the teachers I had. I suppose they had passed the County examination—but it would be hard to

find two individuals more utterly unfitted for handling boys and girls, or two characters more opposite.

Lu Sharp, a sour-visaged, hatchet-faced old maid, presided over the Little Room. I suppose her name was Lucille. She resented her fate and took it out on us. For two years I was under her hawk-like eyes. I got a licking almost every day. I could fool Father, but I couldn't fool Lu. I was expert with spit-balls, but I never aimed right at her. "Spare the rod and spoil the child" was the motto those days. I hated her with all the strength that a nature which dislikes hate and loves joy and love could muster.

Lu was so "durned mean an' ornery." She wasn't "fair ner square." We called her the Yellow-Bitch—from the colour of her hair, I suppose.

One day a marble slipped from my pocket to the floor, and seemed to roll for miles and make more noise than the stage-coach. I was innocent of intent to offend, and I knew she knew it. She confiscated all my marbles—two pocketsful—and a jew's-harp and what had been a pocket-knife. That seemed to me grossly unfair, and I resented it bitterly. Another time a hickory nut fell out of my pocket. True, my pockets were very full. I was sorry, but nothing would appease the old cat. She marched me up to the stove by the ear and made me put all those nuts into the fire. And then she licked me. I could have understood it and could have had some respect for her if she had only confiscated the nuts. But to burn them—what could a boy think of a woman who would do such a thing as that?

For six hours a day we were shut up with that woman! Was *she* a substitute for a mother?

The spring I was promoted to the Big Room I took part in our school exhibition, my first public performance. I spoke a piece, "Little Jim," and was the Winderupjohnny in "Madame Jarley's Wax-Works." I thought I did pretty well that night, thank you. My pride was shared by my family. I suppose it would be more correct to say that my pride was in pro-

portion to that of my family. I wonder how much satisfaction we ever get out of anything that we *know* we can never, never share with any one?

In the Big Room I promptly fell in love. I had known that girls existed, but was not conscious of the volatile nature of that knowledge. Nor had I cared for them—they had not interested me. Girls rarely entered into our games, knew none of our secrets, shared none of our joys. And yet, looking back now, I realise that we were fully conscious of our own sex. We had learned to abuse it in all ways that boys in every country village know about. Too much of our talk and all our “stories” were obscene or had to do with sex. I am amazed at their frankness and literalness; and blush for their brutality and their stupidity. Invariably they placed women in a false or vicious light, and tacitly assumed that they were weak, ignorant, and defenceless. The “joke” was always on the woman—for, curiously enough, these stories were rarely, if ever, about boys and girls.

Right at the threshold of youth our innate unmodesty was converted into immodesty, by mystery—where there should have been no mystery. Things which should have been talked over freely, frankly, honestly, were taboo. Our minds were turned in upon themselves and grew morbidly curious about things which should as yet have remained unnoticed.

Before we were out of the “Little Room” we were perverted—at least in talk and thought. Because precocious, our sex instinct ran amuck. All the restraint, the whole attempt to conceal, only developed in our boyish thoughts an incessant greed to explore life to its very bottom. We tried to be whole men before we were whole boys.

Even our conception of the phallus—a natural object of veneration in early human history—was polluted with lewdness and obscenity. It was not only that our ideas of sex were clothed in the archaic words come down from frankly obscene days and passed on to us by our elders, or that they

were unclean and indecent, but that they were too often false and vicious.

What could we be expected to know of this side of our nature when our instructors are considered? We got our knowledge from no wise and intelligent teacher—not from fathers or mothers, but out of that fund of tradition which boys pass on to boys, and have since the beginning of the age of unnaturalism—and will until the age of enlightenment. What we did not learn for ourselves was acquired from servants and ignorant farm hands. Most of us had been initiated by some clerk or farm hand.

Life came to us as an endless prescription. At home we were to take this, at school that. When we got away from home and school—what could one expect? Here we were, just entering upon a period during which most of our psychic processes centred in sex. Who shall say what the effect might have been had we had a teacher who might have inspired devotion? Instead of that we were harbouring hatred, distrust, resentment, revolt. And the result, considering the teaching we had from the older boys, was inevitable: abuse, lying, secretiveness, hypocrisy—all making for timidity and cowardice.

I feel almost certain that none of my little crowd thought in sexual terms of any of the girls we saw in the schoolroom, or on the playground. Our social environment was too strong for that. We might imagine ourselves having intercourse with a member of the opposite sex, but it was always as a man with a woman, generally an imaginary creature. When I fell in love with Rose Janeway it was a youthful flame quite unsullied by passion.

An imaginary line divided the boys from the girls in school. I sat in the middle of the room within two feet of Rose. She was older. If she were in the Little Room when I was she had made no impression on me. She must have entered the Big Room at least a year before I did. I couldn't rid myself

of the feeling of her presence. Even my new geography couldn't hold my interest. I made no overtures. I merely glanced furtively in her direction as often as I dared. She gave no sign that she was conscious of my existence. But I worshipped on in silent adoration. Though ours was a Protestant community, she was my Madonna.

At last I could stand it no longer. On a scrap of paper torn from my book I wrote: "Rose, I love you. Young Low."

I didn't know what to do with that piece of paper. I was afraid to give it to her, and I was afraid to keep it about me. I couldn't hand it to her in school—Jim Stone's eagle eye would be sure to catch me at it. I couldn't hand it to her at recess—some boy would see me and make fun of me. Father often said that money burned holes in my pocket. But this was a cannon cracker with a lighted fuse. I hid it under my pillow that night. I would get it to her, though, somehow, the next day. I had at last thought out a plan.

Rose lived up the Pike. She left the school yard by a side gate, the rest of us through the main gate on the town side. With the approach of noon I was ready. The bell rang and I was the first out of the room. I made for the back of the schoolhouse. I can still hear the gravel crunch as Rose came toward me. I can see her now in her clean, fresh-starched, blue gingham dress, her trim little body, her long black hair in a single braid, her bright cheery brown eyes. Carefully timing myself, I stepped forward just as she reached the corner, and dropped the note in her way. To my utter amazement—no, I think I had almost expected this, but to my complete chagrin—dainty little Rose passed on by. If she saw the white paper flutter to the ground, or saw me, and I knew she saw both, there was no sign of it. A little toss of her head? I am not certain; perhaps I imagined this.

For days I had been trying to live up to what I felt must be Rose's standard for a "good" boy. But now I plunged back into savagery with all my strength and cunning. That

settled girls forever for me. For a few days it was hard for me to be as respectful as usual to Mother even.

During the month that followed I had more fist-fights than ever before or since. Perhaps Rose was not entirely to blame. It may be that Toad Tanners hadn't stolen Billy's knife, but I thought he had and gave him three alternatives: "You kin giv' that knife back; ernelse gitim anuther; ernelse taka lickin'." He took the "lickin'." My uncle who happened to drive into Markersburg that day found me sitting on Toad and hammering his head with my fists. After Toad tired, he cried out: "H'yer! no fair usin' rocks."

Jim Stone, teacher of the Big Room, was a weazened, crabbed, narrow-chested, wrinkled baboon of an old widower. Perhaps he had married some amazon who had bully-ragged and browbeaten him for forty years, and his only joy in life was the day he buried her. From that time on his one aim was to make boys with growing pains miserable. And he did it to his entire satisfaction. Fortunately I had but two years of him. Any more would have wrecked me utterly. But in those two years I learned more kinds of hypocrisy and cunning and deceit. There was no alternative. When Lu Sharp thrashed us she meant business, and we knew it. But old Jim delighted in wailings and tears, and we saw to it that he got plenty of both.

In every school there is a tradition of devilment. Our traditions were fairly innocent; but with Jim at the rod ours took a more vindictive turn. We began to steal chalk, erasers, pointers, and books. We didn't write names or carve initials on desks—we just whittled them to pieces. We unroofed the coalhouse; we cut the chain in the well; we broke windows; we plastered every inch of the ceiling with spitballs. One boy chewed tobacco. He kept a chalkbox full of sawdust in his desk for a spittoon. Our outbuildings were covered inside and out, in pencil and in chalk, with every conceivable variety of lewdness in prose, poetry, and picture.

It was a contest of competitive deviltry. Occasionally we went so far that we lost our own respect. More than once we agreed that we had really gone too far.

Ten years old and I am to turn my back on Markersburg. The Lows are going to move. There are three of us youngsters now, and Father has worked too hard. Born on a farm, having lived in the open all his life, this eternal pendulum-like swing from house to store and store to house, under cover for such long hours, was telling on him. Mother decided that Markersburg "wasn't a fit place to bring children up in, anyhow."

We are going back to a farm. Not the farm we left, but a new farm, far away. Father has saved some money. He is going to be a farmer. His boys will help him with the work.

Did I shed tears at the thought of leaving Markersburg? Not a drop. I loved the place. I had been happy there. But I was keen on the move. My face has always been set toward to-morrow. I was sorry to leave certain things and certain boys. But most of the time I was thinking how much fun it would be to mould a new environment to my taste, to pick playmates from a new crowd.

And so we left Markersburg.

I wish I knew just what I took with me. Many habits, most of them, my parents would say, bad. Little knowledge, but some love of learning. I was a good speller. I spell atrociously now. I could "cipher." It was said I was the best cipherer in the school. I was a good reader. I liked to read aloud when I had an audience.

Mischievousness had been over-developed with me, not only of my own bent, but by special performances for the benefit of Aunt Evvie, who scandalised Mother by delighting in and approving of my "monkey shines."

Of "readin', 'ritin', an' 'rithmetic," I had all that might be expected of a boy at my age. But I owed little of this to

Lu Sharp or Jim Stone. I sensed it that Father was a scholar. I knew how he loved Shakespeare, Byron, Burns, and the *Spectator*. I knew he was a man of parts. I felt I must be at least as smart as he.

In no sense of the word was I trained. It would be more accurate to say that whatever training I had, I got in spite of my environment. And yet, I feel even that statement must be modified. There was little in the landscape to inspire a growing boy. The town expected little of one. It was enough that the son of a butcher be a butcher. A kind of mental stagnation hung over us. We were a tobacco-chewing community. No boy's new shoes ever travelled a block in that town without being "broken in" with tobacco juice. Bare feet were targets that few of our elders could resist.

We weren't a savage community. We didn't murder each other. Young girls were not seduced, nor married women diverted from the path of virtue. The community was too small for that. It was quite content with itself. It felt its age. Little new blood moved in, little old moved away.

But once inside my own home I felt that something was expected of me. And that something differed from the demand the town itself made. Father was a poet and a scholar by nature. Hard-working Mother was ambitious, and, though her tastes were crude, she loved things she thought beautiful and sought to adorn everything about her.

That intangible presence, then, and the feeling that, go as wrong as I could and would and did, still something was expected of me, were real and must have influenced, if not my actions at least my ideals. To that extent my home environment was and remained a positive factor in my life, broadening and deepening until in mature years I realised that it had been a mighty influence in shaping my bent—so often do the laws of imitation go by contraries.

A few years ago I went back to the Pike. It wasn't as long as it used to be. "COLUMBUS 21 MILES: CUMBER-

LAND 236" doesn't seem very far now. The telegraph poles, against which we used to press our ears to hear the hum of cryptic messages portending death, still carried their singing wires, but the music was of æolian harps. The sycamores still lined the banks of Bloody Run, but they had lost their stateliness. And the Mud Hole, that once seemed vast and profound, it was simply a—mud hole. The Bridge! What a disappointment that was! It had shrunk and shrivelled and was of no consequence. The once mighty "crick" beneath was just a sluggish little creek.

My playmates, my schoolmates, that faithful little band that preferred numbly-peg to arithmetic, were scattered—some dead, one in a drunkard's grave, one serving a life-sentence in a felon's cell—all gone but one, and he was my best friend, my hero, the only boy I really looked up to.

"Yes, he is still here," they told me. "You'll find Fred right over there. Same old place."

Fred's father used to cut the farmers' hair and trim their whiskers, too. I climbed the creaky stairway, the same old stairs that took me up to my first "real" hair-cut—the time when I rebelled against Mother's scissors and Father's thrift.

I hadn't seen Fred for more than thirty years.

"Fred, am I next?"

He never moved. Just a little tightening of the corners of his mouth, and a little narrowing of his eyes as he replied, "You're next, Young!"

He, too, seemed shrivelled up. We tried to talk. But Fred, like the bridge and the creek, had remained as I had left him. They hadn't changed. I had.

It is nobody's fault that Bloody Run, in all these years, hasn't become the Mississippi, or that Fred hasn't become president of a bank, or a captain of industry. The old Concord stage had lost its job, and even the Pike had rusted, its culverts had caved, its milestones had sunk into earth. No telling to what depth of degradation the old Pike might have

fallen—when along came the automobile and with it the demand for roads.

Nothing had come Fred's way to divert him from the scissors and apron of his father—nothing had happened to change the habitual run of his life.

CHAPTER IV

THE FARM—AND NATURE

A HINDU once asked me where I lived. I told him how I got from Markersburg to Bangalore. He said, "Ah! Markersburg is very far away from anywhere." I felt that way in wind-swept, sand-ridden, desolate Broome, on the northwest coast of Australia. Broome does seem a long way from anywhere. Yet the average boy of ten in Broome assumes that his sheet-iron house is the centre of the world. We deal here with a fundamental biologic phenomenon. It is a pity that we continue to submit to this embargo laid on us so long ago by Mother Nature. This self-centred feeling was justifiable in our ancestors. But we boast of civilisation. We talk of brotherly love and idealise humanity. But we don't practise these things. We are still centred in self, religion, flag, nation, race. We can love our neighbour as ourselves—when our neighbour is of our social status, colour of skin, and reactions. To react differently is to be irrational—or savage. By our own footrule we measure success and by our standards rate achievement. Unconsciously, we assume the prerogatives of the divinity and justify our wars of proselytism.

Gravity shifted. Markersburg was no longer the centre of the universe. Now it was "the farm."

It seemed a perfect farm. To my untrained eyes and eager and uncurbed ambition, our two-hundred-odd acres was a whole universe—to be explored, to be conquered, to be loved. It was all so different from the level monotony of Markersburg.

In Markersburg I had to share Pike, Bridge, Mud Hole, and hickory trees with other boys. Maplegrove, that was the name of our farm, had all these and countless other treasures, for our own very selves. I hadn't to share them with any one. Never was feudal baron prouder of a newly-won estate than Young Low was of that stretch of land that held within its hedge rows and old walnut fences all that the soul of a boy could want. There were lanes and private roads; apple and peach orchards; cherry, quince, plum and pear trees; and grape-arbours. And a goose-pond! There was a sweet rolling meadow with great old oak and walnut trees.

And what shall I say of Sugar-Loaf Hill, sixty acres, its brow crowned with maples? There were wheat and corn fields; and beyond, a dark wood, oak, beech, ash, elm, and chestnut, untouched by axe for two generations. There were black haws and wild grape, pawpaw and May-apples, and plenty of sugar-maple trees. The forest faded away down a gentle slope dotted with fern-embowered springs into a rich bottom-land bounded by Bear Creek, sycamore and willow lined—immeasurably finer than Bloody Run. It had more finish, a better expanse for skating, a deeper hole for the swimmer, and a wider range for the young seeker of big adventure.

And there were Indian mounds! Five of them, on the highest ridge in the wood. And in the highest tree on top of the highest mound was a hawk's nest.

Other birds than hawks were our companions and our friends. In spring and autumn the meadows resounded to the rallying cry of thousands of crows and blackbirds. As steady summer boarders we had robins, red-birds, blue-jays, cat-birds, orioles, doves, waxwings, peewees, bee-birds, martins, blue-birds, bob-whites, woodpeckers, owls, whippoor-wills, flickers, killdeers, sand-pipers, wrens, thrushes, humming-birds, and I can't think how many more. But all the time we were on that farm not one bird, except hawks, ever lost its life by a gun, club, or stone in our hands.

I cannot begin to catalogue the wonders of Maplegrove. Even now I can hardly think dispassionately of the old barn, with its deep dark mows and its eaves lined with the homely nests of swallows, and its rafters cluttered with the paper nests and mud domes of waspish friends.

Then there were sheds for sheep and sheds for the cows, and other sheds for mowing machines, ploughs, rakes, and harrows.

There was a stable for the horses—white, shiny, and orderly. We had corn-cribs and pig-pens and chicken-houses. At the other side of the stable-yard was a two room smoke-house; in one room we sugar-cured hams in the smoke of corncobs and hickory boughs; in the other were large vats, one for maple syrup, the other for soap.

The combination wool and carriage-house was two stories high, and in itself worth half the attractions of Markersburg. In front we kept the carriage, the buggy and the old barouche—our rainy weather trap, built ages ago. At the back were bins for wheat, smelling fragrant, pungent, and inviting.

For us young adventurers the upstairs was better yet. I don't mean the room in front where we stored the wool until ready to be sacked through a trap door in the centre. I mean the big room at the back—the room that bore on the door a skull and cross-bones, and this legend:

US BOYS VERY OWN ROOM

It was our sanctum, shrine, holy of holies. Here were our tools, our carpenter's bench, our paints, our trophies—arrow-heads and stone hammers picked up in the meadow, once an Indian village-site, and a skull we had dug out of an Indian mound. "Big Chief" we called him; and we used to talk to this old King of the Mound-builders—and he talked back! He helped us read "Leather-stocking Tales" and started us wearing buckskin redolent with the smoke of sweet-grass, and war bonnets with real eagle feathers; and on our faces

vermilion that we thought looked like real war paint. Our tomahawks were real—only the haft was modern. Our bows were hickory, perhaps cut from a sapling of the very tree from which Big Chief once cut his war bow. The tips of our arrows, too, were real, picked up in our fields and fastened with real sinew.

The spirit of the whole thing got more and more into us. School had not yet weaned from us belief in our ability to subdue nature. Brother Billy was a valuable ally now, hardly a companion, but a willing helper and a stimulus to my imagination. Little Ann, two years younger than Bill, knew what we were up to and was always an appreciative gallery. I suspect we scarcely thought of Father and Mother those days. They hardly counted. Even the world beyond the farm was of no consequence.

You see we were just far enough away from Lanyon to be out of reach of casual town boys. They did come now and then, but we let them know it was by sufferance. We were quite sufficient unto ourselves.

I haven't said a thing about the house! There was a house, of course, a really grand old place. It had a big, high, dry cellar, well stocked with apples, cider, onions, potatoes, turnips, and things.

Then there was an attic. I should have spoken of the attic first. It was much dearer to us. Was there ever such an attic? Its lofty rafters fired our imagination, and its quiet solitude soothed our savage passions. Cedar chests held black and white homespun bedspreads inherited from grandparents, or quaint old dresses—Mother's wedding-dress and the wedding-dress of her mother—and shawls smelling of camphor. There was a chest of letters and papers belonging to Father from war-times. There was a high four-poster walnut bed that came from Father's home.

Up in the quiet gloom of the attic I smoked my first corn-silk cigarette, my first rattan cigar, and my first real tobacco, in a real cob pipe.

There were old books in the attic too—among them school books that Father had used more than forty years before. When I heard little Moslem children singing their Koran under the deodars of India, I thought of Father's old geography which sang of

"Maine, Maine, Augusta,
On the Kennebec River."

He, too, got acquainted with the world through song. There was a big bundle of newspapers, all marked with heavy black lines, showing pictures of the theatre in which Lincoln was shot, the house in which he died, the funeral cortège. There were old *Harper's*, full of pictures of the great Centennial and of the Civil War. There was a horse-hide trunk in which proscribed books were hidden away—"doctor" books, two or three novels, and a lot of old magazines full of good stories of love and adventure. I found a way to get into that trunk—and I really learned to read in that attic.

There was room for all of us in that grand old house. I am not mistaken about its size. It is still home to me. Hardly a year passes that I don't go through every room in it, from cellar to garret, recalling endless days of boundless and eternal joy. It will be home to me as long as I live.

The house stood well back from the road in a broad yard that sloped gently away on all sides. In front and at the sides were elm trees. Nearer were maples, and at each corner a tall pine. Stone steps led up to a long wide veranda. Inside the heavy oak door was a wide hall with a stairway leading to the second floor. The two front rooms differed only in degree of sacredness. One was the parlour—formal, stiff, prim, proper. Every chair knew its position, every ornament on the mantel had its particular place, and, on the whatnot, all stars were fixed stars. We children never felt at home in that room. It was not expected of us. We approached it on tiptoe. It was cold and clammy in winter, except when we had special company and a fire in the grate.

Ordinary company, uncles and aunts, for example, were received in the "libery." This was really Mother's room. Here were her plants, the windows filled with geraniums, fuchsias, begonias, and calla-lilies. There was also a book-case, a heavy black walnut affair. But the books weren't anything a boy would care to read. There was no need of keeping it locked. Even Chambers' Encyclopædia hardly appealed to us. There wasn't a fairy-book in the house—or a book of travel except Livingstone's "Africa."

The furniture here was less formal, and you could see at once that things didn't go in sets. There were stray pieces—odd chairs, and rocking chairs that were almost comfortable. I became very fond of this room, and spent almost every moment of one Christmas recess there devouring the pages of my first literary trophy, a set of Dickens bought with my own money made with my own hands carrying water for the men in the hay-field. Later I read all of Scott (Complete Set, 12 vols., Sixteen Dollars), acquired the same way. I read Macaulay in the barn during dog days, when I was supposed to be pulling mullein.

Behind the library was the "settin' room." Long winter nights, our little family sat here about an open fire. We were usually cheerful and content. Father was absorbed in Shakespeare or Addison, and one winter, after a very severe attack of erysipelas, it was the Bible. Mother crocheted, or made spills—matches in those days were luxuries to thrifty people. Billy and Ann played with toys. I pretended to study. I drooled much of the time, or made popcorn balls, or cracked hickory nuts, or made taffy, or roasted chestnuts. On the centre table was a bowl of apples, by the side of it a pitcher of cider kept sweet by a special recipe of Father's.

Then came the big dining room. The windows on one side looked out on a yard shaded by cherry trees. On the other side was a long back porch that ran the length of the one-story L which included dining room and kitchen, and the coal and wood shed. There was a pantry, of course—very gener-

ous. By autumn its shelves were crowded with jars of apple and pear butter, jellies, and preserves. Mother put up fruit all summer when she wasn't cooking for farm hands. She had a "hired girl," of course. When she couldn't get one I was her dishwasher and Billy the wiper.

The spare bedroom was on the ground floor, behind the parlour. Our rooms were all upstairs, Father's and Mother's in front, and another spare bedroom on the same side of the house. As I got farther along in school I was given the back corner room all to myself. Here I had a stove, bed, table and books all my own. I looked after the room myself. Mother always made my bed, but it was part of my Saturday job, year in and year out, to overhaul the room from top to bottom. It was an orderly room, but nothing fancy; just the room of a boy, who, perhaps because selfish, loved order.

Summer came and winter went and the seasons flitted by. We were growing up. The farm began to lose some of its charm for me. I never ceased to appreciate it, but my spirit rebelled more and more as Father's desire towards perfection in it grew.

Our farm had had a curious history. It had been laid out in the early days by a man who brought his love of nature from England. He planted rows and rows of shade trees, preserved the forest, selected the right hillsides for this or that orchard, planted hedgerows, built the house—put everything where it should be. When the old man died the farm passed to a family who quarrelled over it and let it go to seed. There was mullein in the sheep fields, and thistle in the pastures, and the lanes were cluttered with dogfennel and burdock. The bottom-lands were rank with ironweed. The springs were choked, the ponds unwholesome. Lilies-of-the-valley and trailing-arbutus contended with growths too rank for their tender spirits.

We had hardly settled before Father began a campaign to remove every blemish, repair every fault. For a while it was great. We boys didn't know we were working. After nine

months of school it was fun to ride a hayrake or burn brush. But when it came to pulling mullein by the roots and digging out every thistle, plantain and dock, and picking up every stray stone from the fields—that was carrying it too far.

There is a vast difference between work and play. As a boy of sixteen I would have paid money for the privilege of cutting bands by the side of the man who feeds the threshing machine. It was fun even at the dusty tail-end of the carrier. There was strife in the air, the cry of human voices, the puffing of the engine, the clatter of the big belt that drove the machine, the anguished roar of bearded grain as it was fed into the sharp-toothed jaws of the monster, the rattle of winnowing fans, and the gentle murmur of the wheat pouring into wooden measures. Some of the happiest days of my life were spent about the threshing machine.

There is fine joy in pitching hay. And it was a proud moment when Father said I could pitch as much in a day as a fifteen-dollar-a-month hired hand. Riding the hay-rake, with old Nelly in the shafts, was always an adventure. When I wasn't stirring up a hornet or a bumble-bee nest I was chasing a pair of six-foot blacksnakes—trying to get old Nelly to step on one and get a wheel over the other.

There is sport in competition, there is fun in strife, there is exhilaration in contest. You can't loaf around a threshing machine. It's no place for a laggard. You have to keep up with the machine. Haying was always a race against time. Father would decide in advance to have all the hay in by July first, or, if the season be late, by the Fourth. If a black cloud appeared in the west, there would be too much hay down; and there would be bustle to get it in before the rain came.

Bill and I agreed that a month of a good thing is enough. July saw the end of the rush. The wheat was cut, threshed, and in the bins. The hay was in the mows. Time for fishing now, we thought, time to wander through the big woods, to hunt "arry"-heads, or dig in the Indian mounds, time to

drowse on top the hill in the tall grass under the maple trees. With the coming of Dog Days our wits sharpened. Anything to get out of picking stone, pulling mullein and cutting thistle. Rains were far too few. We didn't so much mind picking fruit, and there was always plenty of that to do. One year we had two thousand bushels of apples. Burning brush wasn't bad business for boys. Even hauling manure from the stables to the fields had a certain pungent charm. But to the last of our days on the farm, Father never managed to get us to like picking stones or pulling mullein.

Bill and I developed new lies, new kinds of bodily aches, hitherto unheard-of diseases, unique excuses for going to town. And we prayed for rain. A stone in a field was the emblem of drudgery. A mullein stalk recalled the days of slavery. Finally the stones and the weeds were conquered. The farm was nearly as clean as Mother's parlour. Millenium? Not at all. Father devised new tasks. This year we must tear down and haul off an old black walnut worm-fence. Another year. . . . But why go on? There is always something to do on a farm. A farm is no respecter of Sundays or of weekdays; it knows no seasons.

It was a clean and a wholesome life. Probably selfish, but far, far better than we lived in Markersburg. I am not certain that I am right in accounting for the change that came over me by the wholesomeness of the farm; but the change did come. It might have come anyway, but part of my viciousness was certainly left on the Pike.

Perhaps the more intimate relationship which the farm brought me with Father helped clarify my concepts. Only once in my life have I heard an ugly word escape his lips. For years a fine collie had been Father's constant companion, our best animal friend. One day the collie heard the call of the wild and killed a sheep. Father said, "Damn!" I was horrified and yet relieved to discover that Father, after all, was a human being, like me. My vocabulary of blasphemy was limited, but I never let Father hear a word of it—not so

much that I feared punishment as that I wished not to offend him. For me to use such language in his presence would cause him pain. I no longer feared corporal punishment. Father had given up the rod.

I forget what I had done: it must have been something atrocious, for Father was very angry. We had just run the barouche out of the carriage house. He grabbed the whip and started for me. I took the whip out of his hands and flung it away. That was our last physical encounter, and the only one in which I had ever asserted myself. I must have felt that I was too big for personal chastisement; and Father must have agreed with me. With that act something broke. I was no longer a child.

That fall I started to college.

CHAPTER V

LANYON—AND CIVILISATION

IT was summer when we moved to Maplegrove. That autumn Father and I drove to Lanyon in the old barouche. Of the ride itself I remember nothing—only the strong emotion I felt remains vivid. The road was already familiar, but before I left that peaceful valley every foot of it was an old friend, for I walked it twice a day, autumn, winter and spring, for eight years, at all hours of the day and night.

But the ride meant a great deal to me that day. Lanyon was not Markersburg. Mother had been careful to impress that upon me. There was a world of difference in the two communities, though they lay scarcely a dozen miles apart. Lanyon was a college town—proud of its piety, its sobriety, and its learning; its people were “educated.” Markersburg was satisfied with its mediocrity and steeped in its dour conceit.

Before Lanyon, Ohio, was Lanyon, Massachusetts, and before Lanyon, Massachusetts, there was Lanyon, England. As Lanyon, England, thought in 1650, so thought Lanyon, Ohio, in 1880. Bigoted, intolerant, narrow-minded. It feared and hated Catholics; it barely tolerated Episcopalians. No saloons. When Mother told me that a pack of cards was the devil’s Bible, and that every leg of every billiard table lodged a nest of imps of hell, she spoke for Lanyon and voiced Lanyon’s beliefs.

As I rode into Lanyon that morning I knew I was at a crisis in my life. A new epoch had begun. I was keen to begin the new race. I knew somehow that I would get through. In spite of Lanyon’s righteousness and straightlacedness, I felt

that I could make it accept me. But I knew that I should be on alien soil there. I wasn't particularly sorry that I was unworthy of Lanyon. I am not certain that I believed I was unworthy. I knew Lanyon considered itself good, and that I did not conform to Lanyon's impossible ideals.

Even the little boys wore shoes and stockings in summer time in Lanyon. Mother was horrified when I once started off, barefooted, on an errand to Lanyon. "Why, Young," she said, "the boys will laugh at you. You mustn't go into Lanyon in your bare feet. This ain't Markersburg. They'll call you a farmer." Now, no farmer's boy cares to be called a farmer. So I walked in, on that hot July afternoon, in the hated stockings and shoes.

The Lanyon public school—as luck would have it, bad luck for me—was at the far end of the town. That meant I must walk clear through Lanyon twice a day.

Father had no idea what I knew, nor had I any real measure of my attainments. I rather expected that I would get into the Big Room. I was surprised to learn that Lanyon had four "rooms." Father turned me over to the principal. He asked me some questions in geography. I knew my geography by heart. I could have bounded Afghanistan better than I can to-day, though since I have come in personal contact with two of its borders. Next, I had to read. And then came arithmetic.

I was scared. I felt I was not doing myself justice. I was afraid I might be sent to the very lowest room.

To my amazement and Father's disgust I was assigned to the lowest class in the highest room. Father protested, maintaining that I neither knew enough nor was old enough. The principal admitted that I was rather young, but was sure that I was prepared to enter. If I worked hard, he knew I could keep up with it. That settled it. Here was a contest. I had already, I never knew quite why, conceived a dislike for the school, but I would show those twelve-year-old boys that I could keep up with them. Father drove away and left me.

Of that school year, except this first day, I remember next to nothing. The charm of the farm, adventure and exploration blotted the school out. I didn't have to work very hard. I didn't get along very well with the boys. I didn't know many of them. I had no pals. After all, I was a new-comer—a country-jake. These boys had grown up together. I wasn't "Smucks" or "Turkey" or "Pudge" or anything of that sort to any of these boys. I was simply Young Low. I knew I could give them points and still beat them at some of their own games, but I had little time to prove it. I had to leave home early enough as it was to get my short legs over the mile and a half to school, and had to start home promptly if I were to arrive before dark.

I soon discovered, back of the school, a hill on which stood one of the most interesting Indian remains in Ohio, an earth-work shaped like a huge serpent. That hill was my friend; that serpent my pal. Many a noon-time, seated on its head, in the shade of a maple tree, I munched my beefsteak sandwich and blackberry pie in solitary contentment.

That winter I was invited to a party. I never cared much for parties in Markersburg. We had enough of them, goodness knows, with plenty of I-spy, and charades, and post-office. Even post-office didn't appeal to me. Who wants to ask for a kiss in a post-office! My Lanyon party was memorable only in that it helped me to the feeling that—perhaps, after all, I was good enough to associate with a nice girl.

Daisy Walls was a schoolmate, a dainty bit of a girl, whom I had already noticed in school. She was rather pretty, with bright eyes, a clean face, a quick mind, and a lithe body. She was the prize scholar of the class, and of my age. I kept wondering if I could muster courage enough to ask if I might see her home. Then I wondered if it would be proper. What if she refused me! Well, if she did, she would do it nicely, I was sure. Quite conscious of my clumsy boots, I made the

plunge. And arm in arm we trudged off to her home. I have always felt grateful to that girl.

I learned no new tricks, or new deviltries at this school. The boys had nothing to show me along that line. They were outwardly Puritans of the seventeenth century. Some of them were vicious, I knew, and some depraved. But they hid it. Theirs were secret, individual vices.

Was I to go to college? That soon became the supreme question in the Low family. Father and Mother inclined toward college. I was keen for it. The simple straight-faced old brick buildings on the hill back of Lanyon appealed to me. I had long since given up the idea of being chief clown in the circus. It was even longer since I had thought it would be splendid to take crazy old Tom Fiddler's place and drive up and down the Pike and along the crossroads round Markersburg exchanging shiny tin pans and sparkling glass tumblers for old rags and iron.

How long I was to remain in the public school was the next question. Father thought I ought to finish. I maintained that if I was going to go to college I should enter the college prep-school at once and get acquainted with the boys who would be my associates in college. I won. The next year saw me a full-fledged junior prep.

For seven years I climbed that Hill of Learning. For seven years I walked from Maplegrove to the top of College Hill, back and forth, five days a week. Our elders never tire of telling us that those are the happiest days of life. I doubted it at the time. I *know* now that they were not. Why should they be? We didn't know enough to be happy. To be really, really happy, one must really have suffered.

The curriculum and scientific equipment of Lanyon college were little better than that of a modern high school. But it was supposed to be a good school. It was a good school—the best in the state. I am not certain that I know what a good

school is—so much depends on one's conception of education. I know this, that in no white calcimined interior of any classroom of that college did I learn to think, or did I learn the fundamentals of any language, living or dead, or of any science.

I learned the letters of my geometrical figures, but I never learned to think in mathematical terms. I didn't know as much mathematics when I got through college as when I left the grammar school, for then I could compute interest. Perhaps my introduction to mathematics had something to do with it. It was my second year in preparatory school.

"Low," snapped the professor, "define algebra."

I started in, "Algebray . . ." that was as far as I got.

"Donkeys bray."

Of course everybody laughed, and the professor had scored. That was not my idea of sport. Even we boys knew that it wasn't fair to pick on a kid. I had no further use for that professor, or for his algebra.

In science I fared little, if any, better. I learned that H_2S is associated with a bad odour and that H_2O means water; and that there is salt in urine. I learned that a mouse will perish in a vacuum; and that a falling body gathers momentum.

We had some natural history. First, a milksop class in botany. When the teacher was looking we counted pistils and stamens—I don't know now which is which—and when his back was turned, "She loves me, she loves me not." I have a feeling that there are many plants that belong to the Composite order, but whether that is because they are double-barrelled or breech-loading, I don't know.

The spring geology course soon developed into a Saturday picnic. I liked it because it came rather late in college and kept me off the farm. The nebular hypothesis is pure nonsense, because God created the earth. The earth is hot inside, and cold outside in winter and hot in summer. Very old

rock is called Ozoic or Ionic—I think Ozoic—and has no fossils in it.

Our final excursion was a three hours' journey by train. Every mother's son carried a canvas bag, hammer, and chisel. The professor must have been descended from a long line of Marathon racers. Alighting from the train we plunged into a forest, and the real business of the day began.

We stopped at the first rock out-crop. Business of everybody breaking off a chunk, labelling it "Exhibit A," and stowing it away in his canvas bag.

That thing kept up for six mortal hours. Finally, we headed for the railroad track—strung out in a long line. Old Prof. led the procession. Jerry Chalmers and I brought up the rear. By the time we reached the fence the line was straggling up the high embankment and some of it was already far down the track. Prof. yelled back, "Hurry up, it's only two miles, and we've *got* to hurry to make our train."

A silent but pregnant sign passed between Jerry and me. We rested for a moment on the top rail of that old worm-fence. Then, carefully balanced in a fork, we stood erect and counted,

"One."

"Two."

"Three."

There were two dull thuds and the rattle of rock and steel. We jumped down and made our way up the embankment. We had parted forever with hammer, chisel, canvas sack, rocks, and inclination for geology.

Then there was Zoology. Now, Bill and I, before we had ever heard of college, had skinned a cat—I don't mean the horizontal-bar kind, but a real cat. We had made out lungs, heart, and liver, and lots of things—and grown excited about that cat. We wondered if we had such things inside of us, and speculated about what makes our wheels go round.

As a let-down to that operation, we played Wild Indian. We took off our clothes and I painted Bill and Bill painted

me a lovely vermillion from head to foot. Now, in zoology, we were told that if you paint a dog red he'll die. I knew better. And I started my zoological career a confirmed sceptic.

It was assumed that we knew how to draw. I couldn't draw as well as a Wild Indian or a Wild Man from Borneo.

One day a wag brought in some little bugs in an envelope. Prof. looked at them.

"Where did you get these?"

"From the bark of a tree!" answered Tom Lang.

A discourse on bodily parasites followed, but we were not told how to avoid them or how to rid ourselves of them.

On the very last day, Prof. Lancaster talked for forty-five minutes about "reproduction." We were as embarrassed as he was. For the first time in our lives, at least I speak for myself, a man had deliberately and not by way of coarse jest spoken to us about sex and about that most vital and fundamental phenomenon of all organic nature, reproduction! We didn't know how to take it. Some of us blushed. The Prof. sensed the way things were moving and tried to relieve the situation by facetiousness. "You see, gentlemen, its motto is 'Excelsior!'" He smiled. But his smile sickened, for the hypocrisy of hundreds of years of puritanism gripped every boy in the class. Nobody moved a muscle or smiled. The Prof. was utterly discomfited.

Logic made no appeal to me—seemed illogical, and unreasonable. It did not teach that it was illogical for seven boys to play poker all night in a small tightly-closed room, late in spring, midst surreptitious fumes of illicit tobacco smoke, and expect to win first prize next morning at Bible reading contest.

Philosophy, of course. It was a puzzle. Things are made of certain things. Wise men made guesses. Arrange these guesses in chronological order—and you have the History of Philosophy.

History? Yes. Lists of generals, battles, kings, dates,

popes. A primer of Roman history. A thimbleful of Grecian history. But of real human history—of the world, of the progress of human culture, of the history of the development of the human mind or institutions, such as slavery, religion, education, marriage, celibacy, and prostitution—not a word.

Latin and Greek—six years of paradigms, irregular verbs and exceptions. We read Horace from a translation, devoting most of our time to poems we had been warned not to read.

I could recite the "Lorelei," though I didn't know what the words meant. I recall no French that I knew at that time. The Italian that stuck to me was: "Pellegrino rondinello."

Darwin startled the World with the "Origin of Species" in 1859—thirty years before I got my sheepskin from Lanyon College. You might be interested to know how we handled that situation. We suspected that the Professor of Zoology took some stock in that theory. But ours was a "strict" denominational school and we were not yet out of the Dark Ages. He shied. A brazen member of the class tried to pin him down one day. He fidgeted loose—and side-stepped.

We bided our time. It came a little later in the year—in the "Christian Morals" class, under that grand old teacher Ebenezer Springthorp, generally and unpopularity known as "Prexy." I don't know how we lugged it in, but in a discussion in which Christian morals and the age of the earth got mixed up, Clarence Summerfield, notoriously wicked, put a frankly plain and straightforward question to the old doctor, and put it in good faith. We all expected an honest reply. What did we get? Now, the old doctor was short and florid. Clarence was almost under his nose. From the vantage ground of the rostrum Prexy leaned over as far as his pudgy figure would allow, and, shaking his fist in Clarence's face, bellowed:

"Young man, those ideas will lead you down to Hell!"

We had a Chinese Wall about us. There were limits beyond which we might not go, things we dared not think about.

The warning was always the same, "Young man, those ideas will lead you down to Hell."

There was a girls' seminary in Lanyon, and Helen Stratton came into my life when I was fifteen. She was fifteen, too. We liked each other from the start, and I learned to love her. It was not love at first sight.

The love between us never grew into white passion. It couldn't have done that. All her life she had been taught, by precept, by command, by social environment, to ignore the existence of the sex within her. My training had been similar—with practice and desire at variance.

Our society demanded certain things of a young man. Its romance belonged to the age of chivalry. It prided itself on its knighthood. We might debase ourselves in every conceivable way, and still remain, if we kept our vice secret, respectable members of society—even though Lanyon's society might suspect, nay, even know. The boy who "wronged" a girl in that society . . . Well, he might possibly live it down; but for the girl there was no escape.

Boys and girls, as a result of years of conscious effort, were able to conceive of the opposite sex impersonally. We had been taught to crush, to smother, to deny the impulses which are natural to adolescence. To them we were taught to say: "Satan, get thee behind me." They were bad and vicious, and they, too, would lead us down to Hell.

It was five years before I dared assume I had the right to kiss Helen. And when I did I felt impelled to smother within me the slightest acknowledgment on the part of my pulse that I was in the presence of a member of the opposite sex.

There could be but one end, in the eyes of our society, for such friendship as ours—marriage. I felt for a long time that I wasn't good enough for Helen. Just what she thought about it, I did not know, except that she assumed all the while that we would marry.

Helen Stratton came from a town near Columbus and be-

longed to a well-to-do family. In the Lanyon Female Seminary she held a position all her own. I felt that she was above me—a farmer boy. I could not imagine what she saw in me that would warrant the interest she took in me, or the liking she had for me. That was the one weak spot in her character!

It was in the spring of my last year in Preparatory School that I met Helen, at a party. It was a proud night for me. With three classmates I wore, for the first time, the Scarlet of the Lambda Psi Fraternity. The Lambdas were considered the most promising lot of men in college.

For a while I had pretended that I didn't believe in "frats." I thought best to assume that attitude, because I wasn't certain that any fraternity would discover my fitness. I little suspected what being a "frat" man meant. I didn't know that on the strength of the badge alone I could borrow money, credulity, sympathy, tolerance, and protection, or that I could capitalise my fraternity connection and make it work for me, or that my social career was already made, without further effort on my part. I did not know that I was about to take another step in the direction of Special Privilege.

We met. We talked—along lines prescribed by Lanyon's habitual conventions. It was probably something like this:

"Did you go to see Thomas Nast last Friday?"

"Yes. My, isn't he great!"

"Wonderful! I have never seen so skilful an artist."

"Have you attended all the Lyceum lectures this year?"

"No, I only heard Nast and Burdette."

"Wasn't Burdette fine?"

"The most interesting talker I ever heard."

Long pause—we had talked the lecture business out. Then a fresh topic occurred to me—I did not know to what class Helen belonged. So I said: "You are a freshman, aren't you?"

"No, I am only a senior prep."

"Are you going clear through the Sem.?"

"I don't know. I would just love to, but Father says he doesn't see the sense of it. Mother wants me too."

Another pause. Then Helen asked, "What are *you* going to do when you get through college?"

"Oh, I don't know yet. I haven't decided. I don't know whether I shall go into the ministry or teach. I've thought a little about being a missionary. It seems to me a noble work. I think all of us, having had such splendid opportunities here, should do something for the uplift of humanity."

Helen agreed with me.

When breaking-up time came: "Please, Miss Stratton, may I have the pleasure of seeing you to the Seminary?"

"Why, yes, certainly, Mr. Low; I should be glad."

I couldn't get Helen out of my mind. There was something sympathetic about her and something finer than that—her figure, her eyes, her hair. I might describe all them to you, but I could hardly expect you to be interested, so widely do ideals of feminine beauty vary.

The busy Commencement season came on that was to let me out of prep-dom. The general quiet and peace of the town gave way to its usual year-end excitement. Our shady, quiet streets were crowded. Events followed each other with clock-like regularity—performances by the literary societies, prize contests, public speaking, Bible readings, Seminary recitals, Field Day, Class Day, and finally the crashing climax, Commencement itself. I knew that many of Helen's friends had come on to see her graduate. Should I get to see her again? I wanted to grasp her hand once more—it was so small, so white, so firm, so frank. My country home pulled me out of town just when the college boys and girls began their evening promenade along Main Street.

For lovers the crowning event of Commencement week was "Field Day." We knew nothing about football and little of baseball. We had never even heard of basket ball. Tennis

was still a girl's game. But almost every boy could run, jump, hurdle, throw the hammer, or swing Indian clubs.

Field Day sports were held on top of the hill, between the North and the South Brick, for we had no gymnasium or athletic field. The hills and vales were our playground. Two sticks across the greensward marked the course of the hundred yard dash. Certain trees and stakes delimited the track for the half mile, the mile, and the half-hour-go-as-you-please races. The jumps, the Indian club swinging, and the boxing contests (until forbidden by the faculty as brutal because somebody had once drawn blood) were held anywhere within the circle. All about this circle were the carriages and buggies of our farmer friends, of the old graduates back for the festivities, and the boys, the real sports, who, weeks before, had reserved a "rig" at the livery stable, to take their best girl to the exercises. Any boy that could afford a horse and buggy and a girl on Field Day belonged to Society.

I knew all these things. Always before, at Field Day, I had occupied a seat in the family carriage. But this year I decided to take a leap. I mustered up my courage and rang the door bell of the old brown seminary, and boldly asked for Miss Stratton. The wait seemed interminable. Would she go to "Field Day" with me? I didn't have to explain all that that meant. She knew. She would. And I realised that Helen was "my" girl.

That summer I thought it over. I had been duly warned concerning the danger of falling in love "too early"; and I, unnaturally, agreed with that point of view. I didn't propose to allow my heart to become entangled. I decided that my interest in this girl had gone quite far enough. When school opened that autumn I would *not* ask her to wear my fraternity pin. I would not take that step. It might go too far.

A few days after school opened that autumn, a "brother" casually remarked, "Young, Willie Salmon is going to ask Helen to wear his pin." Willie was a friend of mine, but

belonged to a rival fraternity. Before that day was over I went again to the old brown seminary, and left my fraternity badge with Helen. I might give Helen up, but I wasn't going to see her tagged by a rival.

Four years rolled by. Our friendship matured, ripened, deepened—but never got reckless. We assumed that when the time came I would say, "Helen, I love you; will you marry me?" And she would protest that she was surprised, had never suspected anything of the kind—and finally yield. She would do that, because she would be expected to do it in that modest and ladylike way.

Much as I valued this friendship, years went by and I did little to lessen the gap which I felt lay between us. I thought that when the time came to "propose," I would be quite worthy of her. I never denied to myself that I had sinned in most of the ways known to boys of my age, but I felt that marriage would cleanse me from all transgression—even as religion would from all sin.

CHAPTER VI

GRADUATION

THERE was no church of my parents' persuasion in Lanyon. Their preordination and predestination doctrines left no room for proselytism. They did not believe in revivals or prayer meetings, or the usual exhortations to come to Christ. Mother thought that if God had so ordained, I would become a Christian, or I would go to Hell.

We were regular, but passive, attendants at church. On communion days we hurried away at the close of the sermon. I came to regret this. One by one, my boyhood companions rose at Wednesday evening Prayer Meeting, related "experiences," and were received into the church, after complete immersion. Not to be baptised was not to be saved.

The Seminary girls attended Prayer Meeting regularly. I began to be regular. Helen, long since baptised, addressed the meeting.

We were told how we ought to "feel." For more than a year I tried hard to get that feeling. I have never worked harder or more sincerely for any goal. I tried to be humble. I tried to be meek.

I had always prayed. That was part of my day's routine habits. As soon as I could talk I had been taught:

"Now I lay me down to sleep.
I pray the Lord my soul to keep.
If I should die before I wake,
I pray the Lord my soul to take.
Bless Paw, Bless Maw: Amen."

Going to prayer meeting and praying to have the spirit within me turned toward salvation didn't materially change my

conduct. But at last I realised that it was not for me to get the kind of experience which some boys and girls declared in prayer meeting they had had. I decided to join Church anyhow. Helen expected it of me. I questioned many things. Much of their dogmatic creed didn't seem to me to be common-sense. But we were told we must not rely upon the promptings of common-sense. We must have faith. We must beware of the devil who comes to us in the guise of questioning.

Even after my mind was made up, it was some time before I had courage enough to stand and ask for the prayers of the meeting. But I did it, and was duly prayed for. Next I had to see the preacher and tell him that I was ready to join the Church. And at the proper time I was baptised.

If the ceremony did not mean all to me that I thought it should I tried to assure myself that it was wholly my fault. I submitted to dictum that I must not allow myself to question. I must take things on faith. My faith must be the naïve trusting faith of a child. And while I probably blundered at it, I did what I could to kill within me every doubt, every breath of questioning. I knew that I was not what I should be, but I tried my best to walk the road that had been pointed out to me.

This led to the formation of a most vicious habit. I would try to stop this or that by swearing off. It came about that in the course of time my ingenuity was sorely tried devising new ways, new oaths, by which I might bind myself to discontinue this or that practice. I called upon Heaven for help in every way that I could think of. I finally requisitioned the Bible in my struggle, and made it a fetish, to help me go where I wanted to go.

During these college days I had a greater passion than for girls or religion—travel. But it was rarely granted me to indulge it except at second hand, in books of adventure, which I devoured greedily and in large quantities. Once a frater-

nity reunion took me to Cincinnati for a day and a night. That was a treat, even more memorable because I heard my first opera there—Emma Abbot in "Hernani." The music meant nothing to me except that I enjoyed it somewhat because I thought I ought to. But the spectacle laid hold on me.

I had made two or three one-day trips to Columbus, once with Helen and another couple. But my first big fling at the world came during the summer vacation between my junior and senior years.

After days and days of coaxing and wheedling, backed up by Mother's constant pleadings, Father reluctantly bought me an excursion ticket to Niagara Falls, with a side trip to Chautauqua. The thirty dollars saved while working with the threshing machine would pay for my board and lodging at Chautauqua. Father started me off for Columbus, where I was to get the through train. Mother had sewed most of my money on the inside of my red flannel undershirt.

Hank Clifford, my companion for the trip, was to share a berth with me in the sleeping car—finally I was to travel in a Pullman Palace Sleeping Car!

"Above all things," repeated Father, as his last word of advice, "when you get ready to go to bed, be sure to hide your shoes under the pillow. If you don't, that rascally porter will find 'em and black 'em and charge you a quarter for it!" Father wasn't penurious. He was thrifty; and a quarter of a dollar for a shoe-shine was absurd extravagance.

In Columbus Hank unfolded an ingenious scheme. He allowed that, because of the excitement and of the coffee we knew we would drink, we wouldn't be able to get to sleep. So we made for a drug store and spent ten cents for two morphia capsules. We discovered that night that the "crazy" druggist had given us quinine.

Chautauqua passed in a kind of literary haze from which I got little except a certain mental stimulus.

I got down to my return-ticket and twelve dollars. By chance I heard about a cheap excursion—so cheap, so allur-

ing, that I could not possibly resist the temptation. All that night I sat crouched and doubled up in the foul air of a smoking-car—but as happy as if I had been in my private car on a limited train. Wasn't I bound for New York City? Bright and early the next morning, a Sunday in August, I landed at the foot of Dey Street. Twelve hours I had, twelve whole hours in which to see New York! And I saw it.

I walked straight around the water-front to Brooklyn Bridge, climbed up, walked across the Bridge and back; rode to Harlem and back to the Battery on the Second Avenue Elevated; rode to the end of Eighth Avenue, and got back to Central Park by surface car. I saw the Museum and the Obelisk, and a rumbling bus carried me down Fifth Avenue. That used up six of my twelve precious hours.

I consulted a paper for Sunday attractions. I decided on Coney Island. By one o'clock I was at the Iron Pier and before the sun had really begun to settle in the West I had had a swim in the Atlantic ocean and was back again at the foot of Dey Street ready for the ferry and the journey home.

New York had not amazed or surprised me. I was prepared for it. It had merely measured up to every dream and expectation of it. And that was soul-fodder enough for one day! and I gloated over every minute of it as keenly as I have over any adventure of my life. But it was weeks before I dared tell my parents I had ventured beyond Niagara Falls. I meant never, never, to tell. But it was so good I couldn't keep it to myself.

The night before Commencement found my bed untenanted—I spent the night at the Frat House trying to win more than my share of poker chips. More than once I had helped rob Prexy's henroost. I was present at every theft of chapel-bell, hymnbook, blackboard, and erasers. I helped fill Prexy's letter-box with molasses and to make the chapel impossible with Limburger cheese. I suggested coal-oil in the college well, and helped land Prexy's cow onto the roof of the dor-

mitory. I had lent a hand in the destruction of real property, though we hardly meant to carry the thing so far, but it was certainly my match which started the fire that burned Prexy's barn.

I smoked—but always on the sly, chewing licorice and other breath-altering delicacies on the road home. I did not smoke cigarettes. Lanyon never tolerated them. To smoke a cigarette was a sure sign of mental weakness and utter moral depravity.

I played pool rarely, indifferently, and with little heart. It was too dangerous. The pleasure of the game wasn't worth the troubled conscience. With poker it was otherwise—overpowering in its appeal to a return to freedom from restraint. As a stimulus for inventing excuses and for downright lying, it stood supreme.

Of drinking I knew next to nothing. I hadn't even an opportunity to cultivate a taste for it. A few of the boys drank, but very stealthily and very rarely. Lanyon was a white-ribbon town. We had no town drunkards.

There were "Bad Houses" in Colbran. I use that phrase because all other names were taboo. I was astounded when I came across the word "whore" in the dictionary. It was a depravity that I could hardly believe possible in a book that I had always supposed to be thoroughly respectable. Did Father know the word was there? If he did, why did he keep such a book in the house?

Temptation came now and then, always in the form of an invitation from a fellow student. For years I stood it off. I wanted to go to a Bad House. I wanted to explore. I wanted sensation. But I positively didn't dare. Most of my schoolmates, I believe, never visited the "House" on the south bank of the canal in Colbran. Most of them couldn't have afforded it, if they had wanted to. Others would have forfeited their eleemosynary aid were it known they had even thought of such wickedness.

At last I decided to risk it. I trembled for a whole week,

while I was saving up courage. I was to go there with a discreet man, Jimmy Bartol—prominent socially and Helen's cousin. He was older—and had considerable influence with me. We chose a Friday night. My literary society always met on a Friday and so I wasn't expected home before midnight. I felt sure I could make the trip and get home without any one's knowing it. I knew that God would know it and would mark it down against me. And I knew that I should know it and should never be able to forget it, and that I might regret it all my life. I had been told that no decent man would do such a thing; that every honourable man comes to his marriage-bed as chaste as he expects his wife to be. But marriage was a long way off. I knew that much might, and probably would, happen between now and then.

It was a long week. My mental agony was intense. I kept saying to myself that I wouldn't do it—although I knew that when the time came I would.

Jimmy was to get the "rig" from the livery stable and I was to meet him at the culvert at the foot of town.

A few minutes before eight I was at the appointed place. It was a momentous occasion. I felt like a culprit. My legs shook, my face burned, my heart pounded. Once in that buggy with Jimmy there could be no turning back—the deed was as good as done. Good? Bad! How insignificant now seemed all the misdeeds of my life in the face of this impending step which would be final and irrevocable. God might wash away the sin—but only a divine miracle could restore my virginity! And the days of miracles were past.

Of course, also, I was a coward. I didn't dare back out.

The wait seemed interminable. At last Jimmy drove up. I started to climb in—then stopped short and turned cold as I heard Father call out, "Young!"

In my excitement I hadn't noticed in the dusk a buggy approaching from the opposite direction. I knew that Father was on a murder jury in Colbran, but I thought he wouldn't get out till Saturday. The case had gone to the jury that

afternoon. Father was on his way home. He had heard my voice!

The agony of that minute! Where was I going? Just riding. Wasn't this Literary Society night? Yes. Why wasn't I that very minute at the Society hall? Well, just going a-riding. Didn't I get enough riding? Well, yes; but we were only going to ride a few . . . "You see, Father, this is Frat initiation night, and we're . . ."

That lie—which for a second seemed inspiration—settled it. I couldn't fool Father all the time. He knew that Jimmy was not a Lambda. He knew the Lambdas, for we had them twice a year at Maplegrove for a picnic.

"I'm sick, Young." Father's voice was husky with emotion. "I want you to go home with me and take care of the horses. I'm sick."

Humiliation at being humbled in the presence of Jimmy, rage at being baffled in a deep laid scheme of adventure; yes, and relief that for the moment my "honour" was saved, and thankfulness that Providence had snatched me back from the gates of Hell. I felt all this as Father and I rode home in silence. Did he suspect? If so he did not say it. I think Jimmy Bartol's reputation—it was good—enabled Father to give me the benefit of the doubt. And I silently thanked him for his silence.

But—I could not, simply could not, fly in the face of Providence again. The warning had been too plain. I retained my "honour." It was easy, for a week later Jimmy graduated, and I have never seen him since.

I had learned to lie and to deceive. Many a time I have felt that I would rather cut off my right hand than lie to Father. To lie to him was the last thing in the world I wanted to do—he was so good—but I didn't seem to be able to help it.

I started at it young and made rapid progress. I disliked very, very much to tell Father that a \$1.20 school book had cost \$1.50, in order to pinch out thirty cents for fraternity

dues, or to pay a loss at cards. I would rather have told him the truth about what my necktie cost—a quarter, not fifty cents. I should have liked to admit that the incidentals of college life cost more than I had expected. I should have liked to go to him frankly and say: “I shall want to spend a dollar and a half Saturday for a horse and buggy so that I can take my best girl buggy riding.” Could I make him see that it was necessary to invest half a dollar in a flower or a box of candy? Would he understand the thirst that, along in June, turns young people’s thoughts to milk-shakes and soda-water?

From time to time I would try to act as my nature prompted, but I got no encouragement.

I was humiliated at my failure, and grieved because I knew that some of my fellow students and teachers did not understand. The community simply refused to tolerate the possibility of certain things; it denied the existence of others—even though every one knew they existed. I seem to have been swept along in a current that I could not check, or control. My inclinations, tastes, and passions had me in tow in spite of myself. Innate and natural promptings were denied me with a simple “no.” No explanation was given. No explanation was necessary. These things are not for boys. Boys need not know about such things.

I used to try to imagine how a woman would look with her clothes off. Some of us made surreptitious efforts to find out. The old medical book in the horse-hair trunk, taboo to us children as though it were the plague, was many a time furtively devoured. We became morbid where nature intended that we should be natural. No plaster copy or photograph of the Venus de Milo or of the Winged Victory adorned the walls of Lanyon homes. They weren’t art. That was nakedness—unwholesome, immodest, immoral. Even Huxley’s hygiene had a questionable value in the eyes of some of the professors.

Better no moral sense at all. Better natural unmoralness than our utterly false and often vicious conceptions of mod-

esty and morality. I was hardly prepared to take my place in the society in which I found myself. I certainly was not fitted for the world beyond.

I recalled again the seeming Providence that kept me away from the brothel. I wondered if it would always be that way. We talk a great deal about the satisfaction resulting from temptation resisted. Would Providence again intervene? I wouldn't have to lie about it now, for one thing. At any rate, the lie would be postponed, perhaps for years. Mother wouldn't suspect. And when Helen would ask me—I felt certain she would sometime—if I had ever . . . The lie would not be easy. But she would never know the difference and I would be faithful to her even until death did us part. But I had no immediate plans. All this was vague and in the future.

At last I fell asleep, hugging to myself the joy of escape from the explored commonplace Known—and the anticipation of the trackless, mysterious Unknown.

The great day at last came and went. I was a college graduate. I regretted somewhat that I wasn't completely illusioned or perfectly satisfied with the coveted diploma by which all men were to know that I, Young Low, had fulfilled the requirements and had completed the four years' course at Lanyon College. I had grave doubts about the character of my education. Too often my general reading brought home to me a sickening lack of knowledge of anything beyond a limited circle of learning.

True, I had the thing they called "education." I probably boasted of and was reasonably proud of certain high marks, but they never quite satisfied me. I knew how they had been attained, how little they really meant. I knew that the oration which won me a place and a prize on the Commencement programme contained no thought, no idea, of my own. My subject was: "The Impending Necessity of Immediately Christianising the Teeming Millions of Asia." I know now how absurd the whole thing was—and that my longings for

the missionary field were fathered by love of adventure. I didn't know it then. At least, I give myself credit for having been honest.

Commencement was the end of college! We were to go forth into the world educated men. We were to be world leaders—Christian gentlemen, elevating humanity and bringing souls to Christ. These were some of the platitudes delivered to us and by us on that occasion. Were we educated? I had not even learned to study. I knew next to nothing about self-discipline.

Yet here I was, turned out on the world, prepared, it was alleged, to assert the functions of citizen, husband, father, and useful member of a vast and complex society. I knew nothing about politics. I inherited my political faith from Mother. I hadn't the least conception of the physiology of my own body. I knew nothing really important about the history of my State and country. I knew no more about how to take care of myself, a wife, or offspring than a savage knows. I had not learned to reason. I was a bundle of bad habits and false inhibitions. With no critical point of view, I was utterly at the mercy of all evidence. I was flung out into life unfit for the race. I didn't know the meaning of it, what my goal should be, or why I should race.

What could I do? I hadn't taken the only "specialty" the school offered—I couldn't survey. I had chosen Italian instead of engineering, and that was about the limit of our choice of electives. I had never had the idea of farming. I couldn't preach. To be a doctor or a lawyer meant more years of schooling. I had no knowledge of business, couldn't distinguish woollen from cotton cloth, or paper from leather shoes. I could paint a barn and shingle a hen-house, but I wasn't a skilled labourer. Without weeks of training I couldn't even have earned the dollar and a dime a day wages of a section-hand on the railroad.

For a few days what I should "do" was the one topic in our household. I wanted to go to school, to begin all over again

—in a different place. But Father didn't fancy that, said he couldn't afford it. I thought of peddling books. I even tried to get an agency for a nursery.

There was something in me which demanded that I do something. I don't know where the idea came from or how it took root, but Lanyon's conception of success did not satisfy me. I could have had a position as clerk in a store, and I could certainly have existed on the farm. But neither appealed to my love of adventure or my yearning to get out.

Father finally agreed to give me fifty dollars, with the understanding that I was to ask for no more money for a year. I didn't know how I should get along or what I should do, or where I should go. I decided to start for the West next morning, because Father said, "The way to do a thing is to do it."

We talked long and late, even tearfully and prayerfully that night. It was a big step to take. At last I went to bed, reeking with the joy which comes from an abandon of imagination, and my mind slowly turned backward, focusing itself dimly at first, then more and more sharply on what I was leaving behind. When I developed the plate into positive terms the picture resolved itself into what I had to take with me. I wasn't any too well pleased. My short-comings—well, they had been pointed out to me all my life, but it seemed to me that no one had ever done this so successfully as I could do it for myself. Knowledge of this fact had made me restive under correction, and resentful in the presence of reproof.

I wanted to be different. But I sensed danger in being different. I knew that I had much that I should have been ashamed of, a great deal that should have caused me grief and pain. And was I ashamed? Did I grieve? I am afraid not. But I hoped that out of it all something different and better might come.

I was hardly yet settled as to my ideals, or decided as to my goal. I naturally knew what the ideals and the conception of success of my community were. I realised that the majority

of my colleagues would achieve that kind of success and attain those ideals; and that they would be satisfied. Would that satisfy me? I doubted it for I had already begun, in a vague and indefinite way, to question the finality of those standards.

I thought myself fortunate in that I came of an industrious line of ancestors, of which no son had gone to a drunkard's grave or a felon's cell; nor had daughter strayed from the path of virtue. If we had not achieved, neither had we failed. I had partaken of the sacrament of baptism and wine, and was in no fear of the Hereafter. That would take care of itself.

What, then, was I to do? Carry on the tradition, hold to the faith, contribute my share to plain living and conventional thinking? It seemed easy. It was apparently simple and logical. Something within me told me it was not enough.

PART TWO: DOLCE-PICCANTE

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CHAPTER VII

THE UNKNOWN

MUCH can happen in a day. One's whole life may be made or marred. After all, isn't that life? We go along for an hour, a day, a year, automatically, mere bundles of habit reacting and acting and acting and reacting in the same way. We bump against a new sensation; a new temptation comes to us in an appealing guise; an old temptation flaunts itself in our face: and away go the habits established by years of inhibitions. We start a new direction, upward, maybe, or down.

So it seemed that day—the day I went West. Nothing much happened. Everything happened. I left home a dutiful son, strong in the determination to do right. I left Columbus elated and sure that a destiny lay before me, that I held in one hand a torch of learning, in the other the flaming sword of civilisation. I suppose I thought civilisation had travelled only as far west as Lanyon. I thought I knew a lot about the progress of civilisation! I knew why Greece had fallen, why Rome had surrendered to the blue-eyed fair-haired aliens, all about the “inherent” weakness of the Spanish and the French which caused them successively to relinquish world dominion. I knew why God, in his love, had destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. What else worth while was there to know? And here was I, the latest product of the westernmost advance of this, the last of all civilisations, starting out to spread its light clear round the world. But that idea didn't consume me; no, I was free—that was the thing of immediate consequence.

It was five in the morning one July day, when I left my parents at the Colbran station platform. Father was pensive, somewhat doubtful, but full of advice. Mother was in tears but happy and ambitious for me. Yes, I promised them I would do this, and that, and I would be a good boy, and I would take good care of myself, and I would be very careful with what money I had, and earn more, and write them twice a week, and think of them every minute.

In two hours I reached Columbus. Helen was at the station to meet me, much against the will of her parents, who thought it immodest and unladylike. We had a ten minutes' stop there, ample time for looks with a world of meaning, for a few words full of joy. Again promises, high resolves, good resolutions, blessings. But not a word of love, no sign of passion, not one added pulsebeat for either of us. More platitudes and then the train crier bawling:

"Urbana, Indianapolis, Vandalia, St. Louis, and all points west. All aboard."

Then instinct asserted itself. I seized Helen's face in my hands and kissed her. I shall never forget the look that came into her eyes—outraged womanhood, horrified, aghast. I didn't know what to say. I didn't know what to do. I could only stammer.

The train was moving. I would have given anything for two minutes and a chance to undo what I had just done. As I swung up on the steps, I looked back—Helen was crying.

Years after, I learned the reason for Helen's strange and unexpected outburst. Her mother confided to mine that Helen, so innocent she was, thought that kiss the first step toward maternity.

It is characteristic for me to believe in the ultimate come-out-rightness of things. But I couldn't help worrying, for awhile, about the unfathomableness of woman. I resented my inability to understand what had happened to Helen—and tried to charge my resentment up to her, but I only partially succeeded.

I wanted her too much. Meanwhile, I knew that it would come out all right and that she would forgive me for the liberty I had taken and that some day we would marry and settle down. But I knew it would be immoral to anticipate that day in thought, and so I fitted myself to my new environment. I began to look about me. I felt reckless and explored the train.

I knew that I was no tenderfoot. I had travelled. I had been in New York. I had the overwhelming confidence of a boy of nineteen, who is willing to trust to luck because it hasn't yet crushed or destroyed him.

After I bought my ticket, I had just forty dollars—more money than I had ever had at one time before. Money was so hard to get I had come to loathe it. All my life I had begged for nickels. I was always in debt. Following the line of least resistance, the coward's trail, I had lied about my debts, compounded them, and paid them when I could—some of them in books, one with a pair of cuff buttons, another with a watch and chain.

But that day, on the way to St. Louis, I felt rich. In the dining car I ordered the most expensive things on the bill of fare. I had already discovered a parlour-car. I *could* sleep on an anchor chain or be comfortable astride a harrow. But I had money now. Nothing was too good for me. I bought a seat in the parlour-car.

I was doing, of all the things I wanted to do, the things which offered the greatest satisfaction, coupled with the least mental and physical discomfort. The veneer of Puritanism, laid on so assiduously, was ready to crack. Before the night was over it had had a hard blow.

All day long I abandoned myself wholly to the delight that is mine when I am in motion. For a few hours the country looked just about as it did around home, and in itself neither aroused nor appealed to me. But I was on a fast train bound for a far country, on a conquest. The mere flight through space delighted me.

As a boy I had had the same feeling behind old Nellie in the

family carriage. That had been my sensation, in spite of dangers apparent and real, when chance carried me miles away from home in a box-car. That had been my greatest pleasure on the trip to Cincinnati, and to Buffalo and New York, and that has been my feeling over hundreds of thousands of miles of railroad travel since—back and forth across America, up and down the highways of Europe, over India, across Siberia and China.

Why is this so? Is a love of travel innate? My ancestors were home-abiding people; or, when they travelled, it was to new pastures. But I had this love of motion as early as I can remember having had feelings. Perhaps it grew because it was so long denied. But there it is; as keen to-day as it was thirty years ago. It is a kind of elation—a soothing and yet gently stimulating wine. Even now when I enter a train, cares, burdens, responsibilities, worries, sorrows, everything drops from me. For the moment I have begun life over again.

My table companion, in the dining car that evening, proved to be a man whom I had noticed casually in the parlour-car. We were late going in to dinner and had the car pretty much to ourselves. He began at once to talk, in an easy, affable way. He was a drummer. "Travelled out of" St. Louis, and "covered" Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska and Arkansas. He was returning from a visit to the New England home of his boyhood. He was well-dressed. I felt that at once—but also that he was dressed differently. We were not familiar with such clothes in Lanyon. They were not loud or offensive—gentle, rather. We should have said they were quite too simple to be effective. He wore a coloured shirt, but it was very plain compared with my own which alternated broad stripes of gold and blue. Nor was his collar as high as mine. And yet we of Lanyon believed that the highest possible collar was the height of fashion. One of our extreme young men had even imported extra high collars from out of town.

Our talk became more personal. My new-found friend

took an interest in me. This flattered me, for he was a man of the world, and of New England. Things New England were things to conjure with! I felt, as I sat there fascinated by this cheerful, well-set-up person, that I was in the presence of a man who could afford to do wrong—his own personality and training would rectify the deed. His very name, Arthur Buckingham, rolled sonorously from his tongue, added to the glamour that enfancied me. I was not used to being addressed by strangers nor accustomed to being considered an equal by men of affairs and so I was more than ever pleased and flattered when he became personal.

"Seen much of the world?" he asked.

The bare truth seemed so commonplace. "Oh, yes, quite a bit. I've been East several times. Of course I don't know all of New York, but I know it pretty well."

I didn't think it worth while mentioning that I had spent a day and a night in Cincinnati, and that I had been to Columbus three times.

"Ever go to the Opera in New York?"

Here was a subject I didn't dare take any chances with.

"Not often. I don't care much about it. I think 'Hernani' is rather fine. Don't you?"

"I don't care for 'Hernani.'"

I wanted to ask him why, but thought I'd better not.

We talked of the theatre. Again I tried to make out a case for myself. I had been to the theatre twice in Columbus—not counting, of course, the half dozen "dramas" given in our own town hall by home talent that took that means of getting money to pay for the new chairs—thereby endangering their social standing. Actors, according to our moral code, were on a par with Catholics—the difference being one of degree, not of kind.

"Ever go over the 'Rhine'?" asked Mr. Buckingham.

I knew what he meant. Every full-grown boy in Ohio was supposed to know what that meant, even if he had never set foot in Cincinnati.

"Oh, yes," I said—quite casually, I hoped—"I've got a girl there."

"What house?"

"Madam Valentine's."

"I never heard of that place. Where is it?"

I lied the best I could, inventing names of streets. I was relieved when Mr. Buckingham admitted that he didn't know Cincinnati very well.

Why did I lie? Apparently, Mr. Buckingham expected and assumed certain things of me. Unconsciously I sought to live up to what I assumed was his standard for a man.

"Some awfully fine girls in St. Louis. Can't I show you around to-night?"

I wanted to be shown, but I was afraid. Something deep within me, moreover, suggested that I could find my own way about if I decided to venture on adventure. I made excuses.

Then our conversation got still more personal. He seemed interested when I admitted my lack of real objective. I had told him first I was going to Denver. I even thought of announcing San Francisco as my destination—especially when I found out that he was going to St. Louis. Competition always appeals to me. I inherited a sporting instinct from hunting ancestors.

But when he frankly asked what I proposed to do I acknowledged that I hadn't the least idea in the world—I began to realize that this man might be able to help me get a job. He discussed the pros and cons of the clothing trade, boots and shoes, and the hat and cap business, and weighed them in the balance as against groceries, hardware, and jewelry—and always from his, that is, the drummer's point of view. That there might be other avenues of success apparently never occurred to him.

He had been intended for the ministry by his father, a preacher. But the father died just as the boy finished college and the family purse couldn't afford the extra years of theological training.

"Of course," continued Buckingham, "I could have gone into the ministry without the damned nonsense of a Divinity School, but nowadays you can't hit it up strong without a Divinity degree behind you—with it you can get a good job at once. Father was a Methodist, but he was willing for me to enter the Episcopal Church because it pays better. Mother thought I ought to teach. But that didn't appeal to me. Then Father died, and I decided to strike out west, just as you've done. Five years ago I landed in St. Louis. Inside a week I had a good job. I make good money now; I like my territory; and I've got a girl in every town."

Unconsciously, it seemed, Arthur Buckingham had fitted into the environment in which he had found himself without great physical pain or much mental anguish. The lesson I learned from this inference did me no good.

It was long after dark by the time we entered the Eads Bridge. Steamboat lights were reflected in the black water of the river. We were half over. At last I was "Out West." I was in a new world.

"Where are you going to stop to-night?" asked Buckingham.

I named a hotel—an indifferent, modest, inexpensive place that Father had discovered for me.

"That's no good. Don't put up at a bum joint like that. Go to the Richelieu with me."

I knew I couldn't afford it, but I went. We were to breakfast together in the morning and discuss plans.

"Room with a bath?" said the clerk.

"Sure."

That clerk impressed me that way—he expected me to take that kind of a room.

"Have your trunk sent to your room?"

"No, I left it at the station."

I couldn't let him know that I hadn't a trunk—that would have been a painful admission for both of us.

A boy insisted on carrying my bag to my room; unclasped

it, brought me a pitcher of ice water, and gazed at the scenery on the wall-paper. I was embarrassed and finally asked him what he wanted.

"Whadjaxpect, yuh jay!" And he slammed the door.

My head was awlirl from the long day's ride, the novel experience, the endless succession of new impressions. The room suffocated me. The bed looked uninviting—as though it had never been slept in.

Before writing Mother I would stretch my legs. I walked down the six flights of stairs because I was too timid to ask where the elevator was. Out on the street in front of the hotel I looked to the right and to the left. In one direction were the usual evening crowds on a brilliantly lighted street; in the other, not so many people, the lights dimmer. I went in that direction. I don't know why.

I rather aimlessly wandered along; interested, of course, looking in shop windows, and at the people I passed. Near the end of the third block a girl, or so she seemed, gave my arm a gentle pat as she passed me at a pace scarcely faster than mine.

"Come on, go home with me," she said.

I made no reply, although I really wanted to go. Here was adventure at once. But I hadn't the slightest intention of doing anything of the sort. Not yet.

Saloons became more frequent. Their character seemed to change. Every few doors I heard a piano. I had been in only one saloon in my life, and that was in broad daylight with an uncle, who went in to buy a cigar.

But I could no more have resisted turning into the next saloon. . . . Why *do* we do these things? I marched straight up to the bar and, before the white-aproned attendant could ask me what I wanted, demanded a glass of whiskey. I had never tasted whiskey before. It was vile stuff, burned my throat, choked me. I coughed and gulped a glass of water.

On up the street. It took even less effort to enter the second saloon. The same demand and probably worse whiskey. With-

in ten minutes I had had—was it four, five—possibly ten glasses of whiskey? I shall never know. I lost consciousness after the fourth glass. But my backbone carried my head erect and my feet moved my body onward.

When I came to, I was in my bed in the Richelieu. The afternoon sun was flooding my room, which was like a furnace. The back of my head was on fire and my tongue was as dry as a baked potato, and as thick.

I felt old, old, old as I crawled out of bed—the agony of it all haunts me to this day. Not only old, but wretched I felt—like a tainted thing. I slunk forward, painfully, and in a dazed way, to the mirror, to examine my face as I had never done before. What could I read there in the reflected image? Was my downfall written there? I could not decide. I could see no real change in my looks. Perhaps I had expected too much. But I was sure of one thing—I didn't want to see anybody. I was nervous, feverish, excited—ashamed and humiliated. And yet I was vaguely conscious that my remorse was not what I thought it should be. In its place, rather, was a strange mixture of ignoble pride over my escapade and craven fear for what the consequences might be.

I looked for my watch. Then suddenly remembered that I had hidden it and a few dollars in change in the closet. My possessions were safe. . . . But . . . Then I recalled that I had started out with three ten dollar bills—each in a different pocket. A feverish search through my clothes disclosed just twenty cents. What. . . . It looked more serious than ever. Thirty dollars was the power behind my argosy! Was this to be the end of my search for the Golden Fleece?

I sobbed in agony. My humiliation was limitless.

Where had I been? What *had* I done?

Meanwhile I had drained a pitcher of Missouri River water to its very mud bottom. And shut out the maddening sun.

Well, at any rate, I didn't want to see anybody—no matter what had happened. And so I went back to bed.

CHAPTER VIII

THE REACTION

WHAT did it all mean to me? I could have answered that better had I known what had really happened. I hadn't the faintest idea. Had I exposed myself to danger? I did not know. I would have to wait and see what developed. I was consumed with remorse—nine-tenths fear.

As I aimlessly thumbed the pages of yesterday morning's paper my eye caught advertisements that I had never noticed before. I read them all. Well, if I . . . And if . . . How long would it be before . . . I had done this thing—not with my eyes open; but . . . What *had* I done? I hadn't hidden my watch and four dollars of my money in my room accidentally. I didn't know what I was going to do when I left the hotel. I suppose I had a vague notion that I would merely go for a stroll but couldn't afford to be robbed. Nevertheless I knew that I had prepared myself for emergencies.

If my feet had led me astray no one had pushed me into it. I hadn't even been tempted. I knew the trap was there. I had deliberately deadened my better self and walked into it. Had I lacked will power? Could I have kept from doing this if I had wanted to? I insist that I had not intended to. It was no plan of mine.

I made one more resolve—to cultivate that will power about which I had heard so much and knew so little. I wasn't certain that I wouldn't fall again, but I made up my mind if I did it would be deliberately and with a clear head.

In one night I had crossed the Mississippi and passed through a portal of life from which I could never return. Now it was time for action. I must get back my self-respect, make

peace with myself. I was far from home, virtually broke, in debt, even, for I hadn't money enough now to pay my hotel bill.

What had my money bought besides a few drinks of whiskey? Had I been robbed of my money—or my honour—or both?

"A job!" I said to myself. "You've got to get a job and you've got to get it quick." I wondered what had become of Buckingham. I found him in the breakfast-room behind a paper.

"You're the man I'm looking for," he said. "What became of you yesterday? Want to travel? Want to see the West? Want to make some money?"

"That's what I'm here for."

"Well, sit down here, then. Eat your breakfast, and come with me. How do you like St. Louis?"

I said what I thought he expected me to say. I really loathed the place, but I knew that that wasn't St. Louis' fault. One doesn't like places in the abstract. One likes this or that city because one likes its people. No, I don't mean its people. I mean certain individuals, or an individual, or because it appeals to one's senses, arouses one's emotions, stirs one's imagination.

We took a tram to the river front and walked down a rough paved street between brick warehouses and the river, lined with steamboats. Blacks hurried about the wharves with barrels and boxes and bales. Everybody was busy. But I was not impressed. I had seen New York's water front.

We went into a warehouse, climbed two dusty, worn flights of stairs, and entered an office where I was presented to Mr. Perrot, son of the head of the firm. He was handsome, clean-cut, and quite elegantly dressed, with a rich complexion, dark eyes and hair—a type with which I was not at all familiar. Buckingham had already told me something about the business and the history of the firm.

For generations Perrot Co. had traded in furs. Of late

years they had more and more dealt with the rough and often shoddy merchandise foisted on the Indians by white traders—everything from glass beads and plug tobacco to boots and blankets. Recently Perrot Co. had discovered that there was money in Indian curios. They had established connections in the East and even with some curiosity shops and museum dealers of Europe. But so far that phase of their business had been merely incidental. As Mr. Perrot put it, they hadn't really attempted to develop it.

He was willing to give me a chance and see what I could do. I was to start as soon as I could get ready, go to certain points which they would designate, giving me directions for getting there, etc. I was to buy certain things, at or under a certain figure. Whenever possible I was to use the stock of the traders with whom the firm had direct dealings, otherwise, cash. They would start me out on trial for two months. I was to ship or bring back what I got. They would advance money for travelling expenses and, from time to time, for purchases. Salary, fifty dollars a month. At the end of two months they would decide whether they would go on with me, making me a new proposition based on the results of my tryout.

I pinched myself. It didn't seem that it could be true. I was afraid I would wake up and find myself back in bed again.

"Shall we get right down to business?" Mr. Perrot asked finally.

Buckingham said he didn't believe he could be of further assistance, and left. I was ready to start at once, within an hour if necessary. Mr. Perrot got out a time table.

"No, you will gain nothing by leaving to-day. Start to-morrow night. Kansas City the next morning—first train out to Omaha, leaving that night for Casper, Wyoming, just in time for the bi-weekly stage for Fort Washakie. Spend several days there among the Arapaho and Shoshoni. And from there you will go . . ." indicating, on a pad, the rest of the trip.

Stage—Fort Washakie—Arapaho—Shoshoni! These words were music to my ears. I feared Mr. Perrot would sense my

delight. I was almost beside myself. This was better than being a missionary to India. I was to do the very thing I wanted to do more than anything else in this world, with all expenses paid. And get paid to do it! It was really too good to be true.

Mr. Perrot dictated half a dozen letters. My head was in such a whirl and my heart was beating so fast I didn't take in much that he said. But I was vaguely aware that he was dictating a general letter of instruction, which proved also to be a contract. Then followed several short letters asking for transportation for me from this point to that, and from that to — till it seemed to me he was covering all outdoors.

I was to call the next morning for my transportation and certain letters of introduction, sign my contract, and get an advance of money. I realised that I was about to get away from everything and everybody. I was going to have the opportunity that I had longed for all my life—be on my own hook, with no restraint, responsible only to myself.

I was positively giddy when I left that office. For hours I walked up and down the river front, unconscious of time and heedless of bodily needs. I renamed all the steamboats and changed their destinations to suit my fancy. About each one I wove a fairy tale of adventure. The older the boat, the wilder its romance.

And there I was, in the very heart of the great Mississippi Valley, the richest, and the finest, reserved by discriminating Providence through some 5,339 years for the final and perfect flower of the world's civilisation. That's what the books said. And I was in the very heart of this heart of the Universe! I hugged myself for joy. My feet touched no ground. My head was above the clouds. All these things of daydreams were enjoyed as real.

I seemed to feel that I must not return to the city—it might destroy the power of the magic which held me—and I should find myself again jobless and penniless beyond the pale of the

wand of enchantment which had been so suddenly and unexpectedly waved over me. The day might be an illusion—I would do nothing to destroy it. I was unconscious of the passing of the day, only realising that it was perfect and complete.

I crossed and recrossed the big stone bridge, watched the swirling eddies in the muddy water below, and the steamboats gliding along smoothly, silently, majestically. A bell clanged as a big boat was loosed from its moorings and backed out into the stream, turned and, with quickened pace, set off on the long journey to the cane brakes and cottonfields of the South.

The world was before me. I would do great things. There was nothing I couldn't do—no mountain peak of conquest too high, nor desert of travail too harsh.

I would make myself worthy of Helen.

We would travel—Helen and I. We would see the world. We would cross the ocean and rediscover the cities of worn-out Europe. We would stand in the Forum where Cæsar fell, and in the Coliseum where Christian martyrs went singing their lives away in the name of Christ. We would idle along the Grand Canal and glide under the Bridge of Sighs. In the Tower of London and from the top of St. Paul's we would ponder over the problem of humanity. We would watch the moonlight on the Parthenon. In our own dahabeeyah we would sail the Nile, past the Pyramids to Karnak and Thebes. We would go to the Holy Land—to muse in the shadow of the cedars of Lebanon and pluck a rose in the garden of Gethsemane. And everywhere I could satisfy my craving for books. We would buy thousands of books, books enough to fill the shelves of our library from floor to ceiling.

We would have children! They would never have to beg for nickels or know what it meant to want something very, very badly. We would *understand* them and make their way easy. They would never have to lie or steal or deceive. It would be easy for them to do right, impossible to do a mean thing. As we grew old and our hair whitened, Helen and I would renew

our interest in life through our grandchildren—possibly great-grandchildren.

Why not? The world is good, life is worth the living. And again I asked myself, "Why not?" And I resolved to *make* all these things come to pass.

I thought of Father and Mother. I would do so much for them. They should keep the farm of course. Father would have plenty of help in taking care of the cows, pigs and horses, and Mother would never again have to break her back over a hot stove in summer putting up fruit. The house would be remodelled—steam heat, hot and cold water, and a big bathroom. And Mother would be able to buy all the flowers in the world—why she could have a greenhouse and grow palms and orchids. And Father and Mother could travel. Father would want to see Stratford-on-Avon first, and then ride on a bus through London, just as his beloved Pickwick did once. He could hunt up the places that Byron loved and feast his eyes upon "old Ocean's grey and melancholy waste."

I took care of all my aunts and uncles—freed them from the wheel and showed them how to rub the magic lamp that brings the genii.

Helen and I would grow old together—to the very end keeping our eyes bright, our minds clear, our hearts pure. I hoped we might die at the same time. A single granite shaft should be erected above our graves by the loving hands of our children.

To-morrow I was to begin this career!

Then suddenly a normal sensation registered an alarm in a troubled conscience and That Night and its possible consequences flooded me. If only I could blot it out! Its potentialities for harm seemed more hideous than ever now. I felt nausea. Why couldn't I be good? I wanted to be. Why had I possibly been a vile thing? Perhaps, even at that very moment I suffered from . . . It would destroy me, body and soul!

I looked at the river again. It seemed less terrible now. It

would all be over in a moment. Wouldn't it be better thus, than to disgrace Father and Mother, and Billy and Ann? Could I ever look Helen in the face again? Must I live a lie to her all my life? Why couldn't I blot it out? God might forgive me and wash away my sins and make me as white as snow, but I couldn't forget. I had to live with that haunting fear. The thought that I had to go through life with that lie festering in my heart . . . Well, one thing was certain, that part of it was over. And I wouldn't gamble any more either! Playing cards might not be as wicked as Mother said it was, but no good could come of taking something for nothing in a game in which success depends on deceit. It just wastes your time, consumes your energy, destroys your will-power. I felt relieved to know that I would never gamble again.

The sun was setting behind the city. Out there on the bridge, it seemed to beckon to me.

I would go back to the hotel and write Mother a long letter about my splendid position.

What if something breaks out on me after I leave St. Louis? Gruesome pictures seen surreptitiously in gruesome books came to memory to terrify me. How long have I got to wait! Sensations never before in my consciousness now again came to the front with startling poignancy. Was *that* the beginning of it? Cold sweat broke out on my forehead. I *must* find out. Would Buckingham know anything about such things? Quite likely. Dare I tell him? Where should I go?

After all, wouldn't it be easier to end everything at once? Great God! If God is good to me now, He certainly *is* good. I mumbled my thanks for blessings expected. *Why* had I ever been so crazy!

I would find out.

I hunted up a pawnshop, loathing myself because I had to do it.

"How much can I get on this watch?"

I hardly dared look at the man. I felt sure he knew all my

secrets. My mortification was complete when he opened the case and read the inscription on the inside :

"Young Low, June 18th, 1890.

"From his loving Mother and Father."

Merciful Heavens! That was my graduation present, my most sacred possession. How sordid was I to give this, the symbol of my soul, into this man's foul hands.

"How much do you want?" he replied.

"All I can get." As long as I was in for it I might as well get in deep. I had no idea how much money I would need. He examined the case carefully, then the works. I knew that the gold in the case was worth forty dollars, for it was massive. "Forty dollars," I replied.

He sighed as though he had lost a child. "All right," he said, and handed me two twenty-dollar gold pieces.

I bought a cigar to change one of the pieces. I had no use for the cigar; I was in no mood for smoking.

I got a paper and looked for the most promising advertisement. There were a lot of them. Each spoke of quick relief from incurable ills. I found one address was on the very street I was on. I went. How I wished I were back on the hill-field picking stone!

I can not tell you what happened there. It makes me blush now to think of it. The moment I set eyes on that harpy I instinctively loathed him and despised his whole beastly business. He set about at once and not very tactfully to find out how long I was to be in the city and how much money I had. Apparently, he was not too well pleased with my replies. For fifteen dollars, he said, he would cure me at once! I took the cure. My common sense told me I was being humbugged, but I realised that I was paying for my ignorance and I hoped that my humiliation was some atonement for my folly.

I choked down my dinner in moody silence in a vile cheap restaurant. Then I returned to my room and began to write

to Mother. But somehow I couldn't make it go. I was restless. There would be plenty of time for writing later in the evening or on the train, I said to myself. I would go to a theatre—it would be weeks before I would get the chance again.

Could the man at the door recommend a good one? He could. "The Empire's what you want. Only two blocks from here."

The Empire proved to be a low music hall. The air was musty, the jokes stale—a vulgar place. Even I could sense all that. Nor did the painted faces of the tawdry courtesans appeal to me. I refused to seem conscious of their presence. But my feet didn't take me away. *Was* the Empire what I wanted?

I was roused from a kind of reverie by a hand on my shoulder. "Hello, Mister. Buy me a drink." And with that a girl seated herself at the little table beside me. I didn't want to buy her a drink. I didn't want to be there. I didn't want her.

"Don't be so cross. Buy me a drink."

Maybe that would get rid of her, I thought. I nodded.

"What *you* going to have?" she asked.

I hadn't thought of having anything. The easiest way out of it, it seemed, was to take whatever she was going to have. She ordered "Two coniyacks."

I hadn't the faintest idea what a "coniyack" was. It tasted something like whiskey, only stronger, more pungent.

"Well!" and she gulped hers down. I sipped mine, with a swallow of water occasionally.

She wasn't a bad-looking girl. Apparently not more than seventeen. There was no trace of hardness or of dissipation in her face—only of suffering and a kind of haunted look. She was simply dressed. This also appealed to me. She was a tiny thing, with the tiniest mouth and the reddest lips. Her skin was dark, her eyes like coals of fire, and her black hair was bound in a single braid around her head. Her hand

seemed soft and firm when she put it across mine—it might have been Helen's hand.

Nothing within me stirred. I must have looked rebellious.

"What's the matter?" she asked again. There was something tender in her voice, something appealing. A sister might speak just that way to her brother in trouble. "I feel bad, too."

"What's the matter with you?" I asked. I couldn't be rude to the girl.

"Oh, everything is bad. I have no place to go. I am lost. I ain't good-looking. Nobody'll have me. Why I ain't . . . I've got no money—no friend."

Inexperienced as I was, I saw that she was telling the truth. My sympathy was now thoroughly aroused. The cognac also had begun to do its work. Nature began to be interested.

"Where do you live?" I asked.

"Oh, I live . . . Come. We find a house. Come. Please."

She saw that I was interested. But I made no move.

"One more drink!" she pleaded. Maybe she didn't understand why, but she knew that another glass of brandy would help her win. Meanwhile I looked her over—appraised her. I could forgive her everything but her familiarity and the fact that she was the aggressor. But I liked her for a little child-like way she had that made her seem different from the other girls about the place.

For a little while I said nothing, but I thought: "Am I going to repeat the experience of night before last?" And then I made a decision.

I would know what I was about this time. I reached for my hat. "Come," I said. "Where do you live?"

"Live?" She looked at me in a dazed and helpless sort of way. "Live?" she repeated. Then she motioned for me to pay the waiter. That done, she timidly laid her hand on my arm and led me downstairs.

Out in the street she seemed more at ease. Some of the

haunted look left her face. We started south. "No," she said, "this way."

We walked several blocks. "Where to, little stranger?"

"I not know," she replied. "You must find. . . ."

Across the street was a shabby three story building with a sign: Rooms, Fifty Cents. They couldn't any more than refuse us, I thought.

I had never seen a woman's body. I had not imagined that anything could be so beautiful. She was tender and kind and sympathetic—as only women who love quickly, eagerly, naively, and with all their heart, know how to be.

Well . . . I had fallen again! My good resolutions had gone like summer snow. But if I had to pay a price . . . I knew what I was paying for.

Within six hours we two waifs had become real friends. At the time I was too much interested in Marie herself to try very hard to learn her history—that was to come later. But I learned that she was penniless and was living with a crippled seamstress who was practically destitute. But what pleased me most was her assertion, in such English as she could muster, that she had walked the streets for two nights and though many times accosted, had found no one into whose hands she cared to trust herself, and that on this night she had followed me into the music-hall—afraid to accost me outside!

She begged me to take her away with me, and I would have done it had I known how and had had money enough. I put her off. But I would see her, I said; I would hunt her up. I would find her, no matter where she might be, every time I came to St. Louis.

Her big eyes glowed with excitement. I had never seen such mute gratitude for what seemed so little favour. It was I, I thought, who had reason to be grateful. I was a sinner now—beyond redemption. But . . . There simply couldn't be another girl like Marie.

I went further. I accompanied her to her lodging, got her

address, gave her ten dollars, and swore by all that was holy I would send her five dollars every week till I returned to St. Louis, if she would remain faithful to me—as I would to her; and that when I came back we would “keep house.”

She promised—with a sincerity which was convincing. And when I kissed her good-bye on the old broken doorstep she put her little arms around me as though she meant never to give me up.

At three in the morning I started back to the Richelieu, at peace with all the world. I seemed to be floating through space, easily, buoyantly, as a toy balloon does when a child lets go the string.

The first thing I saw when I opened the door of my room was a note, on the floor:

“Low:

“If it isn’t too late when you get in, come to my room—406.
“BUCK.”

Had I lost my job? Had Buckingham found out about me? Did he know about my visit to the doctor? That I had pawned my watch? Was it “too” late? What did he mean by “too” late? Well, I’d find out.

I walked down to the fourth floor and along a dimly-lighted corridor until I saw a light through a transom, 406. I knocked. I could hear a voice, “Somebody’s at the door!” Then, “Who’s there?”

“Low.”

Buckingham let me in. Five men were seated about a table which was muffled with a blanket. There were cards on the floor, cards on the table, and poker chips, and beer bottles everywhere, and glasses—on the bureau, on the commode, and on the floor.

“I don’t know whether you play poker or not, Low,” said Buckingham. “Just thought I’d take a chance. I knew this would be your last night in town. Will you join in?”

Would a duck swim? Would a starving man refuse food? In less time than it takes to tell it I had my place at the table. Buck was banker. The game was much bigger than any in which I had ever played. I thought I played poker well. I calculated that there was a hundred dollars' worth of chips on the table. I fingered my money. I had a ten dollar gold piece and some odds and ends of silver and copper.

"Well, I'll start with ten dollars' worth and see how it goes."

As I was presented to Buckingham's companions I seemed to feel one's glance rather sharper than the others. No sooner had I asked for chips when he exclaimed, "Well, if it ain't the same man, I'll eat my hat!" Getting up from his chair he came around to my side of the table and ordered me to stand up. I obeyed mechanically, while the others looked interested and puzzled at the strange move. "Unbutton your vest" was his next command. Again I obeyed and like a flash he drew out a pin, then thrust his hand into my inside vest pocket—never used by me—and drew forth a little wad of bills and flung them on the table.

"There, young man—there should be just twenty-eight dollars in that gob."

Buckingham opened the wad out—two tens, one five, one two, and one one-dollar bills.

"Co-rect!" exclaimed the magician.

"Well," said Buckingham, "out with it—what 'ave you two been up to?"

"Search me again," was all I could find to say. But deep within me something told me that I'd been saved—money, honour, worry. And that incidentally I had made an awful ass of myself.

Thereupon Buckingham's friend, Raines of Texas, told his story—how, on his way home the night before, afoot from a visit to East St. Louis, he had found me at about half-past ten sitting on the Eads bridge abutment dangling my feet over the water, singing, "My bonnie lies over the ocean," beating time

with my little roll of bills—how he sat down amused at first and joined me in song—how, when he saw I was determined to beat the bills to rags, he had pinned them in my vest—and how, when he realised that I was hopelessly out of commission, he had got from me my abode and accompanied me on a street car to the hotel door, where as stolid as an owl I had marched in, in a most mechanical and nonchalant way and had left him without a word.

One of my dollar bills was invested forthwith in beer—my first and last “buy” of that commodity. And on my Texan friend I heaped gratitude—and to him steadily fed my chips, for in the language of the game he was my “Beaty Nory”!

I found I had a great deal to learn about poker, especially about the game as they played it. I was bewildered at first. And the crowd made merry over my ignorance. Each man, it seemed, could deal any kind of hand he chose. Each man taxed his ingenuity to invent something new. Straight old-fashioned poker was dealt now and then, for a joke. There was stud poker, of course, and stud poker with variations. Once the dealer announced the hole card “wild,” that is, each man’s hole card and any card of the same denomination turned up in front of that hand was “wild.” This looked easy. But my last chip—it was table-stakes, and I had invested the last dollar of my recovered money—backed four queens against a hand that I thought, no matter what the hole card might be, couldn’t beat mine.

Out of a harmless-looking 3, 5 and 7 of hearts and the jack of clubs, my opponent made a straight flush. His hole-card was a jack. Of course I could see it as soon as my attention was called to it.

We played “bohickman”; “red babies” or “black babies”—sometimes called “pink,” or “blue.” Next we had a “spit in the ocean.” One card or both in the “spit” might be “wild.” This would be followed up by a deuce-wild jackpot. Next would come a “low” hand. “Little dog” would win this pot. The next man would sing out “straights and flushes.” There

were still other variants in this crazy game, for, as one of the men said when I took my place, "everything went"—including my chips.

"Wait, I'll go get some more money. I didn't come prepared for this. My wallet's in my trunk." Two glasses of beer made it easy for me to say this.

"That's all right," remarked Buckingham. "You can settle up when you get through." Credit is a dangerous thing. I bought twenty dollars' worth of chips, this time. It slipped away, steadily. "Gimme twenty dollars more," I sang out, as though I had all the money in the world.

In the parlance of the game, that twenty "stood up," but not until most of it had slipped away. Then that thing the gambler calls "bull luck" set in. It was getting light at the windows. I had at last mastered the intricacies of the game enough to know what I had. Even at that I often failed to get the full value of my cards. I hadn't become expert in values.

A few minutes before eight, the time agreed upon for closing the game, it came my deal. I had enough chips in front of me to redeem my watch and pay my hotel bill—just about that, perhaps a dollar more, perhaps two dollars less.

I got reckless. Till then I hadn't realised the terrible predicament I would be in if I faced the truth. My watch was in pawn, I was in debt for my hotel bill, I owed the game forty dollars—and I put my all to a final desperate test. I said to myself, "I'll kill this game or die with it." I shoved every chip I had to the centre of the table. I reached in my pocket and threw every coin I had on the table.

"Banco, eh?" they exclaimed.

"Well, I'm dealer," I replied.

To each man I dealt three cards, one at a time. The man at my left exposed his cards. There was no bet and he threw his hand into the discard. The next man exposed two black aces and the queen of hearts. "Banco for my pile!" he ex-

claimed, shoving about thirty dollars' worth of chips toward mine. I turned the top card—a diamond!

"That let's me out," he exclaimed, moving away with language that passes at a card table but elsewhere seems vulgar and vile to the same men.

I had won my first bet. The other hands were uneventful and no more bets were made.

Gathering the cards together, I asked and was granted the privilege of one more deal. The first man—my Texas steerer—had better than a fair betting hand—a red ace, queen of clubs, ten of spades. He, too, plunged his all on a bet which stood in his favour better than three to two. The top card was the queen of spades. "And that will be all for me—thus is my kindness rewarded," he remarked.

And so the game proceeded. Before I had run the deck out, every chip on the table was mine. I had not lost a bet.

Five minutes later I went up to my room with a hundred and twenty odd dollars in my pocket. Providence is sometimes good to the foolish.

It had been a great night. I didn't regret it. I wasn't sleepy. No—I was fit to run a race. I was keen to tackle my job.

Between bath and breakfast that morning I made two resolutions: first, that I would never play poker again; second, that I would never, never again run the risk of consorting with an Eternal Priestess—sober, I knew I would never descend to that depth, I might under the influence of liquor. Marie was *not* an Eternal Priestess.

I decided that, while experience may be necessary, it may be bought too dearly. I couldn't pilot my bark through life if I shipwrecked on the first rock. Within two days I had had some narrow escapes. I could not dare again trust to luck to get me out of such holes! I would stick to the middle of the way. After all, a temptation is not necessarily an inspiration.

Of one thing I was certain, I was no longer a denizen of

the Garden of Eden. I had not stubbed my toe and tumbled out. I had walked out deliberately. Could I get back? Did I want to? Could I give up Marie? I would hunt Marie up and pay her a month's allowance in advance, and get her a decent place to live—big enough for us both!

But, those two vows—I would keep those two vows! And I would never, never again touch whiskey—or “coniyack”!

CHAPTER IX

THE PLAINS—AND MARIE

FOURTEEN months on the boundless Plains—the buffalo country, God's country. A new life—fine, exhilarating, satisfying.

I travelled thousands of miles by rail, stage, wagon, horse, and foot. I dipped down into Oklahoma, staged across Wyoming and the Dakotas. I hobnobbed with Crows and Blackfeet in Montana. I ate dog and slept in the tipis of the Bloods of Canada. I smoked in Piute wikiups, raced with the Apache of Arizona, and knew the Pueblo folk of the Rio Grande. I ate mescal, smoked the pipe of peace, helped pray for rain, and made "medicine" for both solstices. I found the Indian to be everything that people said he wasn't, hardly anything that was claimed for him; and made more friends than I ever dreamed that I should make in a lifetime.

He is a wonderful fellow, this Indian. Not all of them. There are tribal differences—and in every tribe there are some blacksheep and a few grey wolves.

Being a trader I realised that I must get the confidence of my man. It didn't take long to discover that the way to do that was to look at the world through his eyes. So it came about that I saw the Indian with understanding, and when I understood him, I found that he was a child of circumstances, even as I—a grain of sand blown across the desert, a breath-feather dropped by an eagle upon the plains.

And I came to be very fond of these splendid men—physically perfect, with handsome sharp-cut features, clear eyes and sturdy limbs.

Once I had a special request to make of the Cheyenne. I

went about my business Indian-fashion—bought beef, a box of prunes, a sack of rice, much coffee, plenty of sugar. I gave a feast, and forty men ate in silent satisfaction. The patient, good-natured squaws cleaned away the débris. The pipe was passed up and down the line. Then they let it be known they were ready to hear me.

It was my maiden effort at "speaking." I knew that I was talking to real men. I might deceive Lanyon, but I couldn't fool these old warriors. Nobody said a word—only an occasional grunt, as much as to say, "We hear you." I finished and dropped back to the scorched earth.

The reply of old Wolf Robe, spokesman for the Indians, came quickly and to the point:

"We have listened to speeches by many white men. We have learned that they usually lie. Probably you are lying. But we will believe you. Your request is granted."

Taciturn, morose, sombre, Stoics? Just as you or I, when circumstance impels.

Come with me in the dead of night out on the Plains, where a light shines faintly through a tipi. Let us fool the dogs, if possible, and get up close, with only a tipi wall between us and the old men squatting on worn buffalo robes in a circle round the smouldering fire. What are they talking about? Not all talk at once. That would be impolite. One man at a time. The others listen in respectful silence. The speaker is telling about some escapade of youth—how he once out-tricked their common enemy, the Sioux. When he comes to the funny part of the story, you can *feel* the silence in the tipi. And then a roar goes around that circle, laughter that comes from men who have not been taught that it is ungentlemanly to laugh.

The talk is of wars, conquest, boyhood, hardship, triumphs, and privations; of the days when there were plenty of buffalo and horses—little whiskey, no tuberculosis, and few white men. And they know that those days are past, forever—that the Indian, as Indian, is doomed.

I met a party of Pawnee in the St. Louis station once. The old men greeted me as they would a son. We talked rapidly and silently in the sign language that is known from the Saskatchewan to Sinaloa, clear across the Plains.

"We are going to Washington to ask the Great Father to kill us. Our life is finished. The Great Father has left nothing for us. Once we owned Nebraska. At last our holdings dwindled to a hundred and sixty acres. Now they take that from us. We want to die."

Overgrown children? Yes, in a way. We are all overgrown children—or knaves—from the other man's point of view. But the Indians were real men. There is something in far horizons, in the majesty of the unobstructed sun, in the full sweep of moon and stars that makes stalwarts of men.

They felt strongly. They loved their friends, and were loyal to them. They hated their enemies, and killed them. They lived up to their traditions, they obeyed their code—moral, ethic, economic. They shared each other's privations. They gloried in each other's strength and well-being. They lived the best they knew, and most of them died like men, with their moccasins on. They knew Nature and loved her, and so respected Mother Earth that they hesitated to harrow her bosom. The horse was their steed, and on foot they were at home. They talked with the winds and the clouds; studied the stars and the constellations, and knew about their movements; knew the trees and the flowers and the fruits of the plains; and the ways of birds and of beasts.

The old men are inexhaustible mines of lore. They have a philosophy and a religion. Living up to their creed and their code, they contemplated immortality in a Happy Hunting Ground, which was not a walled city, but an eternal space as boundless as their prairies, where buffalo never failed, where corn was always ripening, and where there was plenty of tobacco and wild plums.

"All nature lives," said an old Indian to me once. "Everything is alive. There is a soul in the wind and a spirit in the

wood. The buffalo is my brother. Everywhere is power—and in everything. Man is weak and puny, beaten about by the storm, gored by the bull, and stricken to death by the rattlesnake. He has neither the cunning of the fox, the fleetness of the antelope, the strength of the horse, nor the vision of the eagle. The world was made a long time ago. The gods made it."

"And the end? What will be the end?" I asked old Tawakany Jim in his grass lodge on the Washita.

"The world has four stages to run. We are living in the last. The coming of the white man marks the end of the world."

"Nothing beyond that?"

"*Quien sabe?*" he replied. "Maybe by and by white men disappear, too, and our country come back to us and we come back to our country, and the earth renew itself."

I lose sight of myself as I think of those blissful days. The Indian took possession of me, broadened my vision, sharpened my wits, enlarged my capacity, added to my reverence for Nature.

All these months I was ever on the go, hardening my arm and deepening my chest. My two months' probation had been satisfactory. Not more so than I had expected, for I went into the work with all my heart and strength. Nor had my employers realised the possibilities of Indian trading.

It was not all play, but youth, ambition, and a goal—and Marie—were on my side.

I had heard much of the white men of the Plains—cowboys, traders, sheepmen, cattlemen. I got along with them, but I was too much Indian to like them. They thought they were being just to the Indians. But they were out to succeed and the Indian was what they had to think him to be in order to justify themselves. Indians were "varmints" to be hunted out, "nits" to be crushed with the thumb. They took up space that "decent, God-fearing white men" needed. What if our

government had violated every treaty it had made with the Indians? What if it had lied to them and stolen from them? What if Indians had been herded into shacks in Oklahoma and had died there by thousands of malaria? What if log-cabins do breed tuberculosis?

"What of it? Let them get to helloutovere. They ain't never done nothing. They ain't good for anything."

Yes, I could get that point of view. Beneath the white man's veneer I could see the primitive, savage struggle for existence. But at that particular time I didn't happen to want land. The only thing that the Indian had that I really wanted was something that, as a rule, he was willing to part with for such coin as I chose to give him. I "got" the white man's point of view, but it wasn't mine, and I couldn't sympathise with it, for I was an Indian. I had eaten with him and smoked his pipe.

Rubbing elbows with the Indians was a lesson for me—much more important than any I got out of textbooks at Lanyon. It developed in me a new kind of toleration, a new conception of charity, and—I made a discovery. I wandered among other alien people many years before I realised just what this discovery meant. The Indian neither thinks, talks nor acts as we do—he has hardly anything in common with our conception of life—and yet, and here is the discovery, he got along! His way of living had brought him happiness and prosperity for I don't know how many thousands of years.

It is so easy to tell somebody else what is good for him.

More than once, in talking with men on trains and in hotels, I had been asked to tell about my "experience" with Indian "girls." It was always assumed that I had had such. I got tired of always being thought a liar, but the truth was that no Indian girl ever made the slightest advance or suggestion to me. They have their code and try to live up to it. The young man who returns from Carlisle brings back a tale that, if he

would but tell it, would hush those who sneer at Indian morality.

It is true that for these fourteen months I was an Indian—in this tipi as a son, in that as brother. But in no tipi, log cabin, earth-lodge, grass-house, wikiup or pueblo was I a lover.

No, Marie was my love. I had kept the faith with her—Marie of St. Louis. We had become very fond of each other—Marie and I. She had won my sympathy. But—I never loved Marie. I think that was impossible for me—at that time. Marie thought she loved me, and often cried piteously when we separated: talked once of ending her life. But that did not necessarily mean that she loved me. We were too young to love. Nor had we sought each other out in a white flame of passion. We met by chance. Chance—and a drink of brandy—had brought Marie to me. And I did not know that that could lead to love. Had I had to woo Marie to warm her, and marry her to win her, I might have loved her—and called it love. But a relationship such as ours was outside my conception of what constituted love.

Marie was a conscientious little body, with ways that seemed to me odd and queer at first. Later I came to like them. Her naïveté was not mine. Her wisdom was my ignorance. Our conception of the values of things differed widely. At first, of course, this gulf was not apparent. She had turned to prostitution because she was driven to it. Once in it, she played the game according to the rules as she knew them. But hers was not a prostitute nature. Her father was a judge. The atmosphere of her home had been judicial—not commercial. And she soon became herself.

I have told you she was not handsome. Perhaps you wouldn't have considered her good looking. But passion can be very blind, and mutual understanding and sympathy see far below the surface. Then, too, I had a vague feeling that had Marie been beautiful she would not have been my Marie.

One cannot expect too much from chance—and a drink of brandy.

I have often wondered whether this attachment could have developed into anything else. In spite of my early training and all the ambitions of my youth my innate nature was catholic enough to have taken her as she was. Had I really loved her, nothing I suppose would have kept us apart. But I never thought of her that way. Nor did I take her on as an experiment; or as a novelty, only to warm her into life and throw her aside unconsumed. I could not do that with anybody—or if fate forced me into it, I should share her grief and suffer with her.

I never thought of loving Marie; but I was very deeply attached to her. I came to admire her. She taught me much, opened my eyes to many things, helped me to a broader understanding of life itself—which, if unconformable to Lanyon's standard, seemed normal.

It was only natural that I should hold Lanyon's view of the wornoutness and mouldiness of Europe, and look upon our immigrants as cast-offs. I think I should not have yielded to Marie the first night by the little table in the music-hall, had it not been for a certain oddity of speech and a general foreignness in the way she handled herself. Both my mind and body scented adventure. She was a kind of forbidden fruit I had not even contemplated tasting. That meeting had meant so much that I instinctively followed it up, and when my schedule brought me within a night's ride of St. Louis before my two months was up, I automatically turned towards the east and sought her out. I squared myself with my conscience by saying that I was taking only one day of my employer's time, and that Saturday. Sunday was my own, I thought.

Had she been true to me in the meantime? I never doubted her. I felt quite certain she was playing the game as fairly as I was.

I learned little about Marie the first night I met her. I was busy with other things—engrossed in that most intensive of all

human investigations, the exploration of woman by man. The laboratory of human affairs holds many mysterious experiments, but none of such magic potency as the first trial at the commingling of the two sexes.

What is it that makes this thing so wonderful? I remember a college debate in which we discussed relative values of steam and electricity. Electricity won; largely, I think, because its claims were put forth by a man much our senior, a married man, who contended that it is electricity that brings the sexes together! That argument won the debate.

I was much impressed at the time by the fact that I so often accepted Marie's point of view. Possibly I influenced her ways of thinking as frequently, but I doubt it. She had the stronger and certainly the more open mind. She was a child in many ways. But she had suffered; she had run the gamut of emotions. The world had beat in on her through many pores. I was, as yet, almost untouched.

Each of us lived in a world of our own. But most of my world had been acquired through some word, or book, and was of none too wide a range at that. For me the tangible universe lay between the Rocky Mountains and the Atlantic Ocean, in a fairly straight line running through Lanyon. The outer world, the world of other continents and millions, was a story I had read in books of travel, of adventure, of chivalry. It was all pieced together, of course, by my imagination. But it had merely objective existence, as sun and moon—apart from me. I had no place in it, did not understand it, did not know how I was related to it, or it to me. I could think of it, talk about it, describe much of it. I could visualise it in black and white, in a book—I remembered how the pictures looked.

I am not at all certain that I viewed my own world objectively—apart from myself. I accepted it all, its landscape and houses, its manners and customs, even its gruesome burials, its childlike conception of heaven, and its terrible pictures of hell, as part of me. I was not able to get off and look at these things.

My conscience was, as a rule, well stifled. All my life I had been warned that doubt is accessory to sin. We must have faith, faith, faith. Charity was not the "greatest of these" to us, or hope. We knew no charity but alms-giving. We thought in terms of the absolute. We prayed for an easy life in this world and a snug corner in the City of Pearly Gates. I had pitied the strange Egyptians for venerating the scarab's ball as symbolic of life because from nothing it produced life. But that there might be a fundamental similarity between that and my belief that the Saviour of men sprung from an unfertilised egg. . . . No, no. I could not even have considered that idea. It would have been blasphemy. I could cohabit with Marie, and it might lead me down to hell. But for that there was some hope of forgiveness—to think the other were an unpardonable sin.

When I went back to Marie the second time we began to reveal ourselves to each other as we were. She could do this more easily than I. I had more inhibitions which make for hypocrisy. She never quite knew me. I could not be quite frank. There were some things that I couldn't talk to her about. I could not tell her about Helen—that I expected some day to marry Helen. This was something sacred, not to be defiled by this little waif. But I know now that Marie would have understood.

Marie told me her story with a frankness and simplicity that, at the time, I could not understand. I am quite certain that had I been in her place I should have lied about a lot of things, and put a glamour on it, concealing this and emphasising that. I should have made quite a story out of it, attempting all the while, of course, to be consistent and give it an appearance of truth. But Marie's environment had expected of her only the truth. It had not put a premium on falsehood nor capitalised hypocrisy. Therefore she could abandon herself utterly. The self of me which willed always warred with the self which wanted. But Marie could go straight to the mark

though she was always modest and never lost sight of her ideals and certain proprieties. There were seeming inconsistencies in Marie's story, but, as she said, she couldn't help that. That is life.

I treated Marie at first as if she were an ignorant child. She couldn't be otherwise. My way of looking at things all led to that assumption. I knew what it was to be educated. One must begin in a Little Room, preferably in a village on a pike, and then go to high school, and finally to college, to study mathematics, Latin and Greek, French and German, physics and chemistry, botany and zoology, English and American history, and logic and philosophy. Poor Marie! Marie had had no record like that.

One night I rather flippantly used a German phrase which had stuck in my mind. Her eyes snapped and her very body quivered as she came back at me in a whirlwind of German. I was astonished. I had not expected that. But after all—why not? German must have been her mother tongue! Surely, to speak one's own tongue is no proof of ability. But Marie also could talk Magyar, Slovak, and Ruthenian. I know now that Hindustani and German are closer kin than German and Magyar. Then, too, Marie had picked up English within an incredibly short time. Even for that I could give her but little credit. She hadn't studied English. One cannot be educated, I thought, outside of a class room. I did not know that most of human achievements, including the inventions on which our very civilisation rests, have been products of the minds of men who never saw a "class room," never heard a word of English, and who lived in an age so remote that my Bible denies its very existence.

Marie's story did not seem credible. I boiled with indignation. I had heard of such things, but they were so improbable they seem unreal. Such monsters could not exist in human flesh. Surely there must be some special spot, some special punishment, reserved for them in hell.

Marie was born in Munkacs. Her father had migrated from Galicia to Hungary before Marie was born. He was an educated man, as Jews strive to be, and practised law in Munkacs. He became a judge and, as I learned years later from actual inquiry, was much respected for his uprightness and probity. But he had been killed in one of those wild riots that occur now and then on election days in Hungary, and Marie's mother found herself barely able to feed the mouths of four growing girls.

"Do you know what it is to be hungry, Mister?" She always called me Mister. I couldn't get her to quit it. She was willing sometimes to take liberties with me, but never with the respect she felt was due my name. I was never quite reconciled to her "Oh, Mister! How I love you! I would do anything in the world for you;" or, "Oh, Mister! you are so good to me!"

"Mother had a sister at Kassa who owned a wine store and was prosperous," Marie went on. "Father had made many enemies in Munkacs because of some of his decisions. The rich Magyars hated him; and they killed him. My oldest sister had a good voice and played well on the piano. Mother thought, with a little more training, that Bertha could help take care of us. So we moved to Kassa. We went in an ox cart and were five days on the way. We were not beggars yet, but we had to save. We rented a little house down by the river. It was foul about there and there was much disease. We all worked. We did what we could. It seemed we were always sewing—from before sunlight until long after dark. For a while Aunt Lena helped us, and we went to school, for Father wanted us to be educated. Then Aunt Lena moved to America and the struggle was harder than ever."

Marie often talked about those years of struggle. There were times when she couldn't go on with her story for weeping. Not that she grieved so much over her hardships, but because she knew how her mother had suffered because she couldn't give her children what she felt they ought to have.

"There were too many girls in our family. If we had only had a brother to fight for us and earn money. And then Bertha died!

"My aunt had settled in Cleveland. She wrote us now and then and spoke of her success. But Mother couldn't make out what she was doing.

"It was the day after I was seventeen. Mother got a letter from my aunt, saying she should send me to Cleveland. She promised to take care of me. She said she had a nice young man for me, who had seen my photograph and would marry me. She promised to send me a ticket if Mother would let me come."

A few months later Marie had set out on that long journey, a wild voyage of hopeful adventure, embittered by its harshness and its degradation. The steerage became inconceivably foul while the ship fought the gales for sixteen days. No one met Marie in New York. She was terrified, and impressed only by the brutality meted out to her and her fellow creatures. It was so different from what she had expected! She had heard a great deal of America. Ever since she could remember their friends and neighbours had talked of America, as an impossible place, to be sure, because so far away and the voyage so expensive, but as a place where there was real liberty, and freedom, and justice!

After many days' detention in New York came the long train ride—much more uncomfortable, it seemed to Marie, than the ride from Kassa to Antwerp. It took her a whole day to find her aunt, due to some misunderstanding about the time she was to arrive in Cleveland. At last the aunt was found, or rather, her house—the aunt herself, Marie was told, had gone to Chicago, but the man who was to marry Marie was in Cleveland.

There was a wedding, of course, and Marie set out with her husband, bound for Chicago, she was told. She was taken to St. Louis and sold to a brothel two days later. She was there a week, all the while scheming how she might escape. She

tried to cut her throat with a piece of glass, but was caught and terribly punished.

At last an American girl, who found herself against her will in the same position, helped Marie, and they got out. That the house was in bad odour with the police alone prevented their being returned. After a week of being hungry while hunting work, Marie started to walk the streets, soliciting the livelihood she didn't know how to gain otherwise. The third night I found her.

At first she seemed a bundle of queer contradictions. Her ideas of modesty were different from mine. I might "keep" her, but she retained possession of herself. It was not that she was keeping herself for any one else. She quite understood the nature of her "marriage." I was surprised that she seemed to feel no resentment for this fraud husband. But Marie had not learned to resent the workings of a social system in which she had had no voice, over which she had no control. Such things were inevitable, like rain in summer or a Mississippi river flood. She didn't love the brute. But there it was. It happened that way. She didn't like it. But, then, she didn't like hunger. She admitted that she might even have become reconciled to Madame Alma's place.

"Other girls do. Why, one of the older girls told me not to be so crazy, that after three months had passed I wouldn't want to leave, I wouldn't know what to do with myself if I did." And Marie admitted that it might be true.

At the end of my first two months' probationary period I found myself able to be of real assistance to Marie. She had picked up English very rapidly. She knew a little of it before she left home. I had not imagined that any one could learn to speak a foreign language in so short a time. I had spent years over Latin, but couldn't even ask for bread in that language. I didn't know that there were people in Europe who could talk as easily in Latin as in their mother tongue, that until not so very long ago Latin was the language of the Hungarian Parliament.

I bought Marie some new clothes. They didn't cost much. I couldn't see how she did it. Fourteen dollars made a great improvement in her street apparel. No amount of money could have improved her body.

Then I helped her to get a job as clerk in a department store where ability to speak German was necessary and other languages might come in handy. Not much, four dollars a week; but with what little I could spare her, she could live, and be decent, as she put it.

There were times when I was afraid of her. I had heard of blackmail. I used to wonder if she might possibly get it into her head to try to hold me up for money. For a long time I didn't tell her my real name. I told her I lived in Kansas City and only visited St. Louis now and then on business.

After a while I was ashamed to deceive her. I came to realise that I could trust her with my soul itself. I was filled with platitudes about honour, but hers was an honour which strengthened, the severer the test. Even when I left her I had to deceive her. I did not want to. I told myself it was because I wanted to make it easier for her, but I know now that it was sheer cowardice. The conventions of my society didn't demand that I be frank to a girl from the street.

Our quarters were not much, but we were poor and I did not dare venture too much on this strange adventure. I felt I was skating on thin ice. At times it seemed to me pretty important to be a full-fledged man, in business, earning what seemed to me big money, and having a mistress! But Marie wasn't a mistress—she was just my girl.

Rooms were not easy to find. We couldn't expect too much respectability with enough of tolerance. Marie at last led me toward the river and there in a rather dilapidated ante-bellum mansion we found just exactly what we wanted—two big rooms on the top floor overlooking the river and the smoke-stacks of East St. Louis. There we could at least forget the

world and the world would not bother us. We lived an existence apart, happy in each other, quiet content.

Except for my relationship with Marie during these months, my life was blameless. I often wondered at it. What was there about this little mite of a foreigner—and a Jew at that—that made life and work seem simple, satisfying? Living was the great adventure. I had no need to hunt adventure.

I did not drink at all. Smoking had hardly become a habit. Once I offered Marie a cigarette. She seemed hurt. "Wurry wull," she said. I could never make her say "very well." "Wurry wull, I will if you want me to, but it isn't ladylike." And I was proud of her for it and never tempted her again.

A bed big enough for two; the relic of a once pretentious lounge; two chairs; a bureau; a closet. That was one room. In the other, a little coal stove, a table, two chairs, and a few pots, pans, and dishes. Marie's little body didn't require much food, and I couldn't eat much with her looking on—it seemed indecent. When I was away on business, Marie lived by herself, happy with a German paper and a few books I got for her.

At best we could never have much time together. Once I didn't see her for two whole months. But usually I wasn't out of town for more than three weeks at a time. More than once I drove all night that I might have an extra half day with Marie. Many a time I would accomplish the seemingly impossible. Once I bribed a brakeman to let me ride on a freight so as to make a connection which gave me twenty-four hours with Marie more than would have been possible otherwise.

But I rarely trifled with my employer's time. I never felt satisfied simply because I was doing well. Just enough was not good enough for me. The railroad guide was my Bible. Such mother wit and inventive faculty as I had were always kept keen in a frantic effort to do more than was expected of me and get me back to St. Louis and Marie. I even thought of establishing her in Kansas City. It was nearer my field of work. But it hardly seemed advisable then for I was expected

to return to St. Louis at certain times and sometimes I had to stay a whole week.

Did Mr. Perrot ever suspect me? If he did, what would he think? I used to worry about it.

What would Helen think, if she knew? Even that didn't worry me much. I said to myself: "Well, you started this thing with Marie and if you don't keep it up with her, you will with somebody else. She, at least, is decent and clean." Generally I didn't think about such things. But I was not conscious of an effort not to think about them. I was too busy. Life was altogether too full. The little world that I was exploring and cornering was too fascinating. I just plugged ahead, smiling inwardly all the while, confident that everything would work out all right. And if it didn't, well, I'd pay the price. When Mother used to scold us and called us savages because we played lap-jack, we would defend ourselves by saying, "Why, Maw, it makes a feller learn to tak' 'is medsun."

Dear little black-eyed Marie, I wonder where you are tonight? How many thousand times have I wondered that? Whatever became of you? How has the world treated you? In the more than twenty years since I left you, there has been hardly a day that you have not at least flitted in and out of the window of my mind. There have been times when I would have given anything in the world just to pick you up again in my arms and hold you and look out across the old river at the stars and the moon off there in the east. You were a good pal, better than I knew, better than I deserved. Way off here, so many thousand miles away from you, in a land where your face would not be understood, where your ways would be meaningless, even here, I cannot think of you without a sigh. There is no regret in the sigh, nothing of pain. You were an incident that was an inspiration.

I had arrived in St. Louis on a Saturday morning. I was due there the following Monday morning. When I turned up

at Perrot's, they handed me a telegram—that had been opened.

"We have been trying to get you, Low," said Mr. Perrot. "We repeated this wire to three different places. When did you get in?"

It occurred to me it might be wise to read the telegram before I answered him; but I was afraid. I had a feeling that something was about to happen. Have we a psychic nature that senses things? I think not. But just as Perrot handed the telegram to me I felt somehow that another change had come into my life. I knew the telegram must be from Lanyon and Father. Now, Father doesn't send telegrams for nothing. I don't know why I thought that it was going to take me away from St. Louis and Marie. But I did. And I wasn't so sorry as it seemed I ought to be. The message, "Come home immediately—Father," was dated Thursday.

"I hope it's nothing serious, Low, and that you can come back soon," said Mr. Perrot. "We should be very sorry to have you leave us."

"You've been awfully good to me, Mr. Perrot," I replied. "I don't know why, but I have a feeling that I shall not come back."

We talked about my work and I told him how thoroughly I liked it and of my faith in its success. Then we checked over our accounts and wound them up—I wanted nothing unsettled in case I should not return.

Then I walked over to the ticket office, got my ticket and my berth. Then to the bank. After setting aside some money that I wanted to give to Marie, I had a draft on New York for just three hundred dollars.

I could not leave for Lanyon before seven that night. Marie was still at the store, for we had not expected to meet again till evening.

All the while I had been debating—should I see her again? Should I tell her the truth? I knew where to find her. I could

have gone to the store and asked if she might not come home for the afternoon. Somehow, I couldn't do it. I began a meaningless pacing back and forth, up this street and down that. I wanted to be by myself. That something dreadful possibly had happened back home had hardly gotten into me yet. I could only think of that in a dazed sort of way. I was still west of the Mississippi. It was not going to be easy to break with Marie.

Before I knew it I found myself again in the centre of the big bridge over the river. It was past noon. I walked on to the eastern end. Below me and in front of me spread Illinois. Beyond that was Indiana and my own country. My fourteen months in the West seemed to drop from me. The Indian land existed only in the pages of Belden and Cooper now. Marie was only a memory. The East was my Home.

It would soon be time for Helen and me to be getting married.

Most of my belongings were in our rooms. Should I wait until Marie got home to get them? No, I did the easier, cowardly thing.

I left the money and a note saying that I had been called East and would probably be back in a few days, but that if I didn't, I would write. She must be a good girl and not forget me.

The west was still glowing that night as we pounded over the bridge. I watched for a light in our window. Yes, there it was. Had Marie read my note? What did she think? Should I ever see her again? How much should I miss her? What had she meant to me?

So much that my throat choked me, and my eyes were wet with tears. But back of all that and more grievous was solicitude for Marie's future. If I could only know that she would not be unhappy, or come to grief! And I prayed to the God I knew that He would bless little Marie and make her happy!

Then there was no glow at all in the west, for the sun had long since set and it was now quite dark.

Then the east began to respond to the call of the waning moon now beginning to glow off there over the prairie in the east.

CHAPTER X

KING'S MOUNDS ACADEMY

I DIDN'T sleep much. What *did* Father mean by "Come home immediately"?

Is Father sick? Mother? It might be Bill. Maybe it's little Ann. But that can hardly be—it isn't the time of year for diphtheria or scarlet fever. Green apples? Perhaps Bill has been thrown from a horse. Maybe the family is going to make a move. Maybe—and I broke out in a cold sweat—Great Scott, maybe Mother has heard about Marie! And so I wore the night away.

At that it was not a bad night. Nothing *could* have happened. But something was *going* to happen. No doubt about that. Father wouldn't spend good money for nothing. True, I had been promising, and promising, and promising, to go home for a visit. Maybe this is a scheme to get me back? No. Father wouldn't use a telegram for that. Why wasn't he more explicit? He could have sent ten words as cheaply as three. Why this attempt at thrift? Then I thought of how I spent *my* money and how Father spent *his*.

It must be Bill. Maybe he's dead! How should I feel? How should it affect me? Should I cry at the funeral? I felt certain I should. I cried so over Smike's death. I am such a baby about such things.

I knew how it would be. The church would be full of people and everybody would be looking glum. The farmers would all have on rusty black neckties and shiny black pants, and our whole family—all the aunts and uncles and cousins—would be over at one side, on the mourners' benches—all in black! The preacher would talk about this and about that, and we'd

all sit up straight. And then he would come to the part about Willie having been such a good boy, and such comfort, and such joy to his parents. Mother would have managed to keep from crying until then, but with that she would start. Then I'd begin to blubber—like the kid I am. I could just see the tears running down Father's haggard cheeks to lose themselves in his whiskers.

At last it would be time for the preacher to preach. I knew what he would do. He would make Bill's death an example to every boy there. Warn them they'd better be good before it was too late; and try to scare them into getting religion while yet there was time. And then he would wave his arms condescendingly and say: "O Grave, where is thy victory? O Death, where is thy sting?" But we would know. We didn't want to meet Bill by and by; we wanted him now, wanted him with *us*. We *needed* him.

Well. . . . Perhaps it was *predestined*. Maybe Mother's predestination theory is right, after all. Boys are not supposed to know about such things, anyway. Well. . . . If it was, it couldn't be helped. No doctor could do anything for a boy predestined to die of cholera morbus on a certain day in August of a certain year. It wasn't Father's fault. We all have to die sometime. What difference would a few years make anyhow? Father was worth so much; my share divided by two instead of three would be . . . Was it possible that I could even think of such a thing? I was horrified when I realised that I had got almost reconciled to little Willie's death!

Perhaps, after all, brother love is not innate. Instinct makes no demand that we love our fellow men—even our brothers. I could see the nature of the conflict within me. Greed, on the one hand, sly and insidious, saying: "One less mouth to feed, one less to share in the estate." Society on the other, demanding grief—grief because of the loss of a brother, one unit of a successful estate. We didn't know much about overcrowding. We knew there were overpopulated areas in the

world. That condition would never be ours. It was not yet immoral for American families to have half a dozen children. Ours was quite small enough.

But I didn't *mean* these thoughts. They just got into my mind. I couldn't help it. I'd get rid of them as soon as I could. And I proceeded to do it—by dreaming of Marie and long journeys into distant lands.

Even before I could distinguish people on the platform, I spied the family carriage, and Nellie hitched to the rack behind the red brick station. Mother saw me first. I fell into her arms as I got off the train. Her eyes were full of tears—of happiness. I could see it in her face. That settled that. No one is dead! Mother doesn't know about Marie! Father came nearer dancing up and down than I had ever seen him. He, too, looked the joy he felt at the return of his first-born.

"Well, well, Young, back again, eh?" That was all his emotion permitted him to say. He started off to get the carriage. Then Mother took me in tow; pushed me from her a foot or so; and looked me over from head to foot.

"You have grown, haven't you? You look so well!" she said.

I had grown. I realised that. I was bronzed with the sun of the Plains. I must have radiated life.

Then something startled her. I knew it, even before she did. With a mother's sharp intuition she was sizing up a situation. I doubt whether she was conscious of it, but it showed in her face. She stepped up close to me, put her hands on my shoulders and looked into my eyes.

"Has—something happened to you? Are you a *man*?" Somehow she knew instinctively. I nodded. Apparently she was not wholly displeased. This surprised me, but not so very much. She had that kind of mother tact which knew how to take the inevitable and what to do with spilt milk.

"I'll tell you about it some day," I said.

"She was not a '*Bad*' girl?" asked Mother.

"No." Mother would have understood Marie. Father wouldn't.

It seemed good to climb into the old carriage again. The rattle of the hubs was music to my ears. The combined odour of harness oil and horse sweat, that summer day, brought back a thousand memories. The very dust of the road was fragrant. And it was good to smell sweet clover and burning brush. I was glad to get back again among the hills I had known so well.

It all came out on the ride home. Fred Carter of Lanyon had been offered a professorship in Lanyon College and was about to resign his position at King's Mounds Academy. As soon as Father heard this he drove to Lanyon to beg Carter not to notify the Academy until I had had a chance to apply for the position.

"But, Great Snakes, Pa, I can't fill Fred Carter's shoes."

"Why not? Haven't you as good an education? He says himself that you know as much now as he did when he started. It is only an Academy—just boys and girls."

But Mother had already settled matters. "Of course you can, Young, and you are going to, too. I *want* you to. I *always* wanted you to teach. Didn't your father once teach school?" I never could argue with Mother. She was too aggressive for me.

Before we had reached home the whole thing was arranged. I was to go to town that afternoon and get from Carter a letter of resignation and recommendation. Next morning Father was to drive me back to Colbran to take the train. I was to carry the resignation myself to King's Mounds, and on the spot urge my own candidacy. Father was hopeful—but fearful. Mother hadn't a doubt.

The programme went through that way. Carter was very good. Told me about the people I would have to deal with, how I ought to look, and the part I was to play. He would have given me more advice, but we agreed it wasn't necessary

then. I was after the position now. As soon as I got it—oh, there was no doubt about that, in my mind—I would return home to spend the two weeks before the Academy opened.

King's Mounds is not easily reached from Colbran; it takes three changes of cars and six hours. I was rather weary, but the first glimpse of the citadel I had come to conquer brought back all my energy, and indeed aroused my enthusiasm. What a sight! What an arena in which to stage an intellectual struggle! Nature had immaculately framed the broad terrace on which stood the town of King's Mounds, buried in dense foliage. In front flowed the placid Ohio in a majestic curve; a noble amphitheatre of lofty forest-covered hills formed the other half of the encircling setting. About a mile from town could be seen the seven great tumuli of the Mound Builders, each a perfect cone unspoiled by "science," each crowned with a chaplet of stately oaks. Nor was there any mistaking the Academy, a long, three-story red brick, just in front of the mounds, commanding a splendid view of the river for miles.

At the station I hired what had been a hack. It rattled up through the town, which seemed interesting enough, and then turned into a mile-long drive between fine old elms.

In the Academy parlour I gave my name to a negro maid and asked to see the President.

I confess I felt rather important—though my new shoes hurt my feet. I wore my "graduating" clothes—silk hat, Prince Albert coat, and "fancy" trousers.

The old lady at last arrived. I think I have not told you the President was a woman. She wore a rusty black velvet dress edged with feather trimming, a moth-eaten wig, on crooked, and Aunt-Jemima shoes. Her chin was as sharp cut as her eyes were deep set, and the lines of her face focussed in her mouth.

I did not feel quite comfortable. Here was a woman who would never be content to look through a keyhole if she could possibly open the door.

"Well, young man, what can I do for you?"

"I have a letter here from Professor Carter."

"P'fessah Cahtah, eh," she sniffed. "Why do you bring me a letter from P'fessah Cahtah?"

King's Mounds was on the Ohio side of the river, but Mrs. Bromfield had her English from south of the Line. She motioned me to a seat, and found one herself. She kept fumbling—it seemed eternally long, for she kept boring me through with her eyes—in a deep pocket from which she finally brought out a battered tin spectacle case. She adjusted her glasses and began to read. I could tell when she came to the place where Carter recommended me—she looked over the top of the page at me a moment. But what she thought. . . . I could as easily have read my fate in a bed of ashes. The letter finished, her eyes began to drill me again, while her skinny old hands put the spectacles back in the case and into her pocket. I wished she would stop tapping one foot against the other.

"Want to teach here, eh?" Her voice was not harsh. It couldn't have been called clear. But it certainly was effective. It cut. Well, I couldn't be as good as Prof. Carter, she said. She hated to lose him. He behaved himself. He was a good teacher. The boys and girls all liked him. Even Mrs. O'Brien liked him. I didn't know at the time what a tribute that was.

She looked at me steadily—sympathetically—mercilessly. Then she rendered her decision. "No. You won't do. You wouldn't be here a week before you would be making love to every girl in school. I don't dare risk you. You are too young."

This looked serious. I began to plead my cause in earnest. The very reason she gave for declining my services made the position doubly alluring. I decided then and there that I would teach in that school and that I would not make love to any of those girls. That is, if I should, that old cat would never know it.

Besides, there was Helen. Helen and I could get married now. Anybody that can teach school is old enough to get

married. Should I tell Mrs. Bromfield about Helen? I decided I'd better not. Something might develop.

On the way to the Academy I had noticed that this borderland town had a kind of feminine beauty I wasn't familiar with. How could I tell? I might fall in love with a King's Mounds girl. I *might*. How *can* one be certain about such things? Quite as foolish to say, before you've tasted it, that you *know* you won't like a new kind of ice-cream or chicken fried in a new style, or that because you love to swim in fresh water, you won't care for surf bathing.

But I had made up my mind. At first I was a little doubtful—couldn't get up much enthusiasm. As I bumped about on slow day trains, I more and more realised what I had so recently left behind—that great thing that had meant so much to me out there beyond the Mississippi.

Still . . . To be a professor! That was certainly something. Anybody can trade with Indians. It takes brains to be a professor, and character, and a lot of things like that. Why, I might even get a call to Lanyon!

And so I argued with the old lady and would not be denied.

Finally she gave in, just as she does to book and lightning-rod agents. She was human enough to take a gamble, and that is really the way she put it. "Well, I will risk it. But," she added, shaking a long, bony finger at me, "mind you, keep those eyes to yourself, young man!"

We got down to the matter of compensation, where I should room, and various other odds and ends, including such a detail as that I was to take charge of the Academy Library.

What was I to teach? Apparently, the question was of little importance. It is really true that so far neither of us had considered this. Madame President assumed that a "college man" could teach anything. And I? I suspected that I could teach one branch as well as another—at least I had played no favourites in college except Dickens and Scott, such romantic history as Gibbon and Macaulay, and certain games of chance.

"There will be one or two other changes in the faculty," said

Mrs. Bromfield. "It will be a week yet before I can make up the schedules. There is plenty of time for that. I can let you know a day or two before you come what you are to teach, so that you . . . Oh, you better bring all your schoolbooks."

A professor at twenty! It seemed too good to be true. I certainly was coming on in the world!

I decided to get out of King's Mounds at once. I had a vague notion I ought not to go back to Lanyon—ought to hide some place where the old lady couldn't reach me by letter or telegram. She *might* change her mind!

By eleven o'clock that night I was in Columbus. Before I went to bed I wrote two letters: to Perrot, I said "Adios"; to Marie, "Adieu." The next morning I was home.

I could not postpone any longer seeing Helen. On Saturday morning of that same week I went.

I will not tell you what Helen said to me, or what I said to her, for I haven't the least idea—it was just that conventional. But when I left her, Sunday night, we were engaged. I knew it would be that way. At any rate, that was one thing in my life that seemed predestined.

Helen blushed very becomingly as in her child-matronly way she made amends for her strange behaviour in the station more than a year ago. She was not afraid to kiss me now. And she did. And I put my arms around her. I felt I had a right to do that now. I should not have dreamed of such a thing before—that is, with Helen. There was a certain indefinable something about Helen that seemed . . . well, that put her in a class with Mother and Sister Ann. I simply couldn't think of her that way.

One thing she said pleased me much. "I always knew, Young, that we would be married. All this last year I knew that, even though your letters were so few and so, well, so kind of far-awayish. I know you have been awfully busy, but sometimes it seemed that you had . . ." Then that

pure, sweet face would light up, and I knew that Helen was willing to be kissed. The kisses, too, were conventional—but my heart beat faster than I thought it should. And I would say to myself: “Now, look here, Young Low, this sort of thing won’t do. Helen isn’t that kind of a girl! It isn’t right to get excited about her,” and I’d move away.

Helen’s mother was nice. She was *for* us—she had always been for her daughter. But I couldn’t say that of the father. I couldn’t say much of him, for I seldom saw him—what I did see wasn’t reassuring. He was on the kill-joy order. I learned afterward that he would have interfered had he dared. But he had found out, and I learned this, too, later, that he had to let Helen have her own way. She was a saint and a purring kitten, but when opposed she could make a nasty scratch.

No date was set for the wedding. That would take care of itself. We hoped it wouldn’t be too far away, but we knew it might be a year or two, or possibly three.

Helen’s father was rich enough, as far as that goes, to have set us up in life. My father, too, could have started us out. But it no more occurred to Helen or to me to suggest it to them than it occurred to them to say: “Look here now, you two, you are no longer children. Nature has equipped you with the only thing that seems to interest nature—time to pay nature’s debt. Mate and increase. You have natural impulses. Set them to work in the natural way—or you may bottle them up to your moral damnation. Your character, habits, desires, inclinations, emotions, are still unformed. Get together. Help each other. Learn to fit into each other, to be two in one and one in two. You are closer to each other now than you will ever be again. Strike while the iron is hot. Postponement means—risk.”

In short, nobody said: “My children, be happy. We are with you. We have enough. We will see you through. We will not hoard our money. Share it with us.” No, nobody said

anything like that. If they had we should have doubted our ears or their sanity.

Back at King's Mounds—Professor of Modern Languages, History, and Zoology! A place has been assigned me at the faculty table in the big common dining-room. I have a seat on the platform at Chapel. I know in advance which week I must "lead" chapel and which Wednesday night I must "conduct" prayer-meeting. I have a class room with

PROFESSOR LOW

on the door.

I am settled in my own room, a big high ceilinged corner room on the second floor, with a window on the east looking out over the mounds and the emerald hills beyond, and on the south a balcony from which I see the graceful hills of Kentucky and the smoke of steamboats ploughing the waters of the Ohio.

On the wall, my trophies. Over the mantel, my College Diploma in a bright gilt frame. Above that, the Diploma of Lanyon Academy. On the mantel are personal souvenirs of the West, to wit: one Indian tomahawk from Iron Shirt; one peace-pipe presented by my friend, Black Coyote; one dagger, fashioned from an officer's sword, a memento of nights passed in the tipi of Lone Bear; one Colt's revolver, a gift from Standing Eagle; and a pair of spurs, one still stained with gore and horse-hair that I wouldn't have removed for real money. Without that I couldn't have proved to my friends how I nearly killed a jaded horse in Nevada in a frantic endeavour to find a water hole when I was about to perish of thirst. On the walls were other trophies—a Winnebago medicine pouch, a Calumet pipe, a food-bowl carved from the knot of a tree, a pair of beaded moccasins, a war shield, baskets, and a beaded knife sheath. I lost no opportunity, especially when women were present, to parade these evidences of travel and prowess—advantages which my fellow teachers, Alfred Stopes and

Wayne Haddon, had not had. I was just like the wild man of Borneo with his skulls, or a golfer with his silver cups.

"Professor Low, I just love your class."

"Why, Miss Thornton, I didn't know you liked history."

"I don't, I just hate it. I never *could* remember dates."

I was a little puzzled. But I soon got used to it. Miss Thornton liked me. She liked my voice. She was grateful because I did not ask her to learn dates. I knew just enough about history to realise that dates do not count.

Before I had presided over my little class room a week I had been humiliated a dozen times. By the end of the school year I had grown accustomed to humiliation and had found out how to turn defeat into victory. I should not like to repeat that year's experience. Not that way, at any rate. I had rather undertake to train seals to balance balls on their noses. But I did what they paid me for and did it so satisfactorily that, in spite of some complications during the year, I was asked to come back the next year at an increased salary.

I couldn't. It would have been criminal. It had been a hollow mockery. When I think now of those boys and girls cooped up within the four dreary walls of that old Academy, dissecting fishworms, unravelling the intricacies of the Constitution of the United States, learning French irregular verbs and German paradigms, I feel faint. I was quite as well qualified for teaching a Chinese sage the Analects of Confucius.

Stopes, Haddon and I had gone after persimmons. It was one of those fine Autumn days when everything is colour, and the very air is of vintage quality. We had had a long bracing tramp back over the hills into a broken wild grape and chestnut country beyond.

Stopes was a quiet little fellow—genial, honest, clean as

the heart of a ruby still in the earth. He came from a simple, honest, God-fearing old Kentucky family.

Haddon was quite a different type. Born in the neighbourhood, he was long and rangy, like a lone elm. His arms dropped out away from him. He, too, was clean of mind and sound of body.

On the way back we stopped on top of the highest hill to rest and enjoy the superb view.

And we got to talking of women. This subject had never come up before with us. We were not yet well enough acquainted. We felt a kind of modesty about discussing such things. We were the only male members of the faculty. Five women teachers. It had been vaguely rumoured about school that Stopes rather liked Mrs. Polly O'Brien, the widowed daughter of the President. But we did not discuss that. Haddon and I knew that Stopes could do no wrong.

We talked about marriage. Not our marriage, or anybody's marriage in particular. Just marriage.

"No man," said Stopes, "who has already had experience with a woman should marry, or if he does, he should tell her all about it and get her forgiveness."

"I wouldn't go so far as that," Haddon interrupted. "A girl might lead a boy astray. Then he might fall in love with a girl who wouldn't understand these things and couldn't forgive him. It would be all right, I think, if he married the girl and admitted it later on, after he had proved his fidelity."

"What do you think about it?" said Stopes, turning to me.

I said what I knew they expected me to say—not what I really thought. I wondered, after I got into bed that night, whether these two men could possibly be deceiving me. Perhaps each one of them had said only what he thought the other two expected him to say.

I wonder if men are more frank about such things than women. Apparently men allow themselves a certain license in conversation that women never do. But, after all, don't they, too, shade their ideas to fit the implied demands of their

hearers? Of course, when the barriers are broken down, men often go to the opposite extremes—and hang women's scalps on the wall of conversation along with other big-game trophies.

I was bringing my little flock of good Baptist girls home from church one Sunday night. We men always chaperoned on such occasions. Winter had just set in. Snow, and a moonless sky. I led the way.

That night I had preached the sermon. I had prepared it carefully. Early in the service I lost my place and floundered. I got back by saying to myself, "Let your damned notes go. Talk to 'em." And I had talked out of my heart. I knew I needed charity, and I talked charity—the kind that is born of understanding, not the kind that condescends to throw a dime to a beggar.

"Why don't you preach every Sunday night, Professor Low?"

It was little Mary Thornton. Wasn't that fine of Mary, I thought. I wanted to pick her up in my arms and hug her. I felt just that way. Out of gratitude. Then I felt that that would be wicked.

At the door of the Academy building I stepped aside to let the girls go in first. When the last of the line had passed into the hall, I realised that Mary Thornton was standing beside me.

The door blew shut. It was dark. We were alone. I had a flash of a sense of danger, and started forward—to bump into Mary.

Her hand found mine and my lips hers.

And Mrs. Bromfield found us both.

If I had thought about the matter at all, I should have supposed that the old cat was in bed, where a woman of her age should be at nine o'clock Sunday night. But it seems that she had gone to church, too, but had got in late, and no one had noticed her. Nor had I heard the wheels of her carriage

in the soft snow. But I wouldn't have heard anything just then, not with Mary Thornton's little round face close up against mine.

She had the decency to dismiss Mary and send her to bed.

Then she turned on me. Called me a viper, which she had been nursing in her bosom. Said she knew it all the time. She showed her claws and fangs, and she looked hideous—like a gaunt, hungry tiger driven to prey upon children. It was awful.

She stormed and scolded and abused me till midnight, and finally got hysterical. How the devil was I to get out of it? I had been perfectly honest about the whole business. I wasn't a housebreaker—she called me that. I hadn't robbed her girls of their virtue—she said I had. Or sent their souls to hell—as she said I would. Mary and I liked each other and nature had brought our lips together and our arms about each other. I was dismissed from school in disgrace a dozen times that night.

Finally, the old lady's daughter, Mrs. Polly O'Brien, came in and we told her the story. She said we would talk it over in the morning. I was to go to bed and mind my business. I was glad to escape.

A note the following morning. More discussion. We compromised. Mary Thornton was to leave my class. I was not to speak to her again. If I did, I would be dismissed at once.

Then a strange thing happened. Mrs. O'Brien discovered me. Up to this time she had seemed to think there was only one male teacher in the school. And I will confess that I had been hardly aware of her existence. I hadn't seen her very many times. I hadn't been impressed one way or the other. She was fairly good-looking, and about thirty, I'd say. She had charge of our "Art Department."

Two or three times the following week Mrs. O'Brien dropped into the college library, a big barn-like room, with bookcases along two sides, a table in the centre, and a window

at the far end. A dark cheerless place, and, except for Mary J. Holmes, not much in demand.

First she asked for a book I knew she knew we did not have. Next time it was a book I knew she knew we had, big, heavy, antiquated Robertson's "England." Family heirloom, I suppose. Books were books in that library as long as they could be counted and filled up the shelves. I suggested that I'd like to try to find what she wanted in a more modern history.

"I don't want to bother you," she protested. "I know how valuable your time is."

Now I knew that she knew my time was not valuable and that it was hers anyhow, or her mother's, because the family was paying for it. She had a nice smile. Agreeable. "I never saw more beautiful teeth," I said to myself, as she leaned over the table by me. Somehow the subtle odour of her body got to worrying me. Her round, rosy, freckled face was framed in a riotous mass of reddish hair. A lock of it jiggled my ear. My fingers tingled. They wanted to get into that hair and muss it up. But I didn't say anything about this. I hoped she would move away—and wondered if I would dare follow. I could just feel her nearness. I hoped she wouldn't move away.

I kept on thumbing the history I was consulting for her. Quite by chance—it must have been quite by chance—her hand came down on mine, and was withdrawn instantly. But I knew it had been there. Hang it all, why wouldn't the woman let me alone? I was trying to be good. I was as quiet as a wire-corked bottle of champagne. She was tampering with the wire. Did she know I was charged, that with the wire cut the stopper would fly? Well, it's her funeral anyhow, I decided.

Had she tried an experiment? I'd try one. I put my hand—I tried to make it seem by chance—on hers.

And left it there—fully a minute—pretending, of course, that I didn't know it was there. I could feel her breath come

and go out of the ordinary. There was a kind of straightening of her shoulders, and a heaving of her breast. I didn't know much about these things, but I was certain something was taking place within her, too.

I didn't know what to do, but I decided I would find out. I found myself quite unexpectedly and unintentionally in nature's laboratory. I would conduct an experiment. I let go the pages with the other hand and dropped it on her free hand. Still no other outward sign from the little widow. Then the head came a little closer and her hair brushed my face. The last wire. I grabbed her like a young wild beast. I had never done that sort of thing before. Prudence, acquired restraint, training, everything was swept aside. There was no Marie, no Helen, no little Miss Thornton. The old lady herself might go hang if she wanted to—this woman. . . . A bell rang. We both jumped. It was the warning-bell for supper. She tried to move toward the door.

"Let me go," she whispered. "I must help Mother dress. . . . Come. . . ." And she was gone.

I dropped back into the chair, trembling from head to foot. "And so," I said to myself, "you don't yet know all there is in this world."

It was my "turn" to "ask the blessing" that night; when I returned to my room after supper I found a letter from Mother and one from Helen. Their combined influence—and a deepseated fear of the old lady—restored me to the Lanyon normal. I avoided Polly for days. Later we became good friends. But I never dared to put my hand on her head.

The winter was a record breaker, they said. Never so cold, never so much snow on the ground. Two or three nights a week we teachers smothered ourselves under blankets in the hay of a wagon-bed on runners, and jingled up and down the hills. Mrs. O'Brien always went with us now. We always managed to get close enough to each other to get a finger interlocked. But that was all. She was a discreet little body! Her mother, no one ever suspected how close to the brink

we had stood. And poor Stopes was still considered a possible lover of Mrs. Polly O'Brien!

I used to speculate about that affair with Polly. Suppose we had really jumped over! It wouldn't have been fair to Helen—my conscience told me that very plainly, as it had when Marie and I were light-housekeeping. But there would have been a difference—I felt sure of that. Then I would puzzle over the two affairs. Would there have been any difference? Would Lanyon distinguish between Polly and Marie? Would my parents? Well, one thing seemed certain—my affair with Marie would seem more wicked to Lanyon. Marie was a Bad woman! An outcast—an alien, a foreigner—a Jewess! Intimacy with Polly, I was sure, would be serious enough, but with Marie it would be worse, sacrilegious even—it would be spiritually immoral. Would Helen ever forgive me for Marie? Helen must never know. I would not dare risk telling her.

But she might accept an affair with Polly. I could easily make her see that it was all Polly's fault—that I had not sought Polly out—that I had had no "bad" intention. Yes, Helen might forgive me for Polly.

Would Lanyon accept Polly? "Suppose," I reasoned with myself, "Polly were the same young attractive widow in Lanyon, the relict of a professor, and that I were . . . well, say a young instructor—and that we were . . . Well, very discreet. But suspected. And suppose . . ." But I thought I knew what Lanyon's verdict would be. Lanyon would say: "As long as there is no scandal, we will not provoke one. Sh-h—better not say a word—it will do no good." But everybody in town would know about it. Everybody would see to that. And everybody would pretend that nobody knew. Lanyon might tolerate a discreet liaison—but provoke a scandal! Never.

Do not misunderstand me. I didn't lose much sleep worrying about such academic questions. I just liked Polly tremendously and blessed her that she had dared show me that

human side of her nature. It seemed a rare adventure. It was very beautiful—as it had worked no . . . What might it not have led to?

It was all Mary Thornton's fault anyway. If she hadn't liked that sermon I preached that night, we wouldn't . . .

By spring I had begun to realise just how little I did know. My sad lack of real wisdom on the subjects I pretended to teach made itself apparent to me more and more insistently. With my little band of eager-eyed—I started to call them playmates—well, let it go at that—with my little band of eager-eyed playmates, we dissected fishworms. And then a bullfrog. Life began to mean something to us.

A little Miss, who had wandered into King's Mounds from Kentucky, made so bold one day as to ask—we had just finished dissecting out the skull of a frog: "Professor Low, what does *our* skull look like?"

I resolved then and there that if I taught school another year I would have a human skull, yes, a whole skeleton in the class room. My imagination carried me further—why not have the students dissect a human body? Wouldn't it be worth while for them to find out how they were made?

An interest in extinct beasts was curiously aroused. Some workmen on the railroad cut had come across fragments of the bones of some huge monster. While spading in a small Indian mound I had found a few bones. What were they? cow? horse? buffalo? More and more my spare cash went for books about bones and such things. I even sent to New York for the leg bone of a buffalo. But my mound bones wouldn't fit it. Then I routed out the remains of a horse and discovered what I had. But the bigger bones from the railroad, I discovered, came from a mastodon. That settled it.

Yes, I think that mastodon was responsible for another straight line in my zigzag life, for another angle of departure.

I knew that they did not know much about bones at Lanyon. I would go where they did.

' When the school year came to an end, I had decided to spend the summer in Lanyon and clean up the bones of all the stray cats, dogs and sheep for forty miles around. I would dissect the heads and lungs and livers of every animal, big or small, that fell foul of me. And when autumn came . . . Well, Mother always said she wanted me to go to a *big* school—in the East! Now I knew I was going to go. I had enough money of my own to last me a year.

CHAPTER XI

THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

HOW I loved bones! Their very texture came to have a meaning for me. Every peculiarity in shape was significant. Dry as a bone? Bones are dry, but not half as dry as dates.

I found Cambridge a busy big world of its own. I was glad to be there, and, as the days wore on, I rejoiced more and more at my good fortune, and thanked my stars that I could be part of this great laboratory of human thought where men tried things out.

Why had I ever been enamoured of the West? Thus it is in men's lives; we eat, drink, sleep, and readjust ourselves—or smash. With companions—with some one to love—I believe one could become attached to hell. Hell, as it was painted to me, though, never had seemed very undesirable. My idea of punishment is forty degrees below zero.

I had persuaded Haddon to go to Harvard with me. We had agreed to meet in Washington on a certain date and go on by steamer from Baltimore. I had sent my books and bones on ahead by freight. And I said good-bye for nine whole months to the folks, to Lanyon, and to Helen. Couldn't afford the trip back home at Christmas.

I can see old Haddon now, standing on the top step of that white marble stairway that leads to the nation's capitol. His long arms were working like a windmill. His long legs had got him to the top first.

"Hurry up, Deke," he shouted. We called each other "Deke"—short for Deacon. We once decided that we would be dea-

cons—so we “Deaconed” each other, till it became Deke. “You’re on top the world up here. Just think of it, you and I, up here in the shadow of the finest building in the universe, the capitol of the greatest country of all times!” We believed that. Really. It helped us to feel proud of ourselves. We took considerable credit to ourselves for being citizens of a mighty republic.

We pulled Washington up by the roots and turned it over in two days. We didn’t spend much thought on the machinery of government. We assumed that, took it for granted. The best brains, the great scientists, the great statesmen of America, flowed into Washington. We didn’t know their names—not even the names of our own Senators. We had no idea who represented us in the Lower House. We were old enough to vote, but we were just boys yet. It wasn’t any particular business of ours anyway. This was a democracy. We voted for men to represent us. We hired them to go to Washington to run the country. Hadn’t they done it? The slaves were all free. The Civil War was a blessing! It was the *making* of us!

It was good to see the portraits of the men whose words we had proclaimed so proudly—Webster, Sumner, Clay, Patrick Henry, and that one greatest of all times, George Washington.

We wound up next day by dropping down the Potomac to Mt. Vernon. No pilgrim ever approached Mecca, or crusader Jerusalem, more reverently. Great men of other lands might have lived in statelier mansions, but their marble piles had been built at the cost of human suffering and sweated labour. We had read that in a book.

Then down to Baltimore for a few hours. I remember only shiny, grinning negroes shucking oysters in rough, smelly sheds. That night we boarded ship for Boston. I considered myself a first-class seaman, having once made the voyage from the Iron Pier to Coney Island.

“Deke,” I said the next morning, “how do you feel?”

"Well, I hope I don't feel as you look. What's the matter with your gills?"

"Now look here, Deke," I said, "I have never been seasick in my life. Only women get seasick. If you give up, I'll be disappointed in you. It's all in the way you think about the thing. Just decide you're not going to get sick, and you won't."

We strolled into breakfast. I ordered a great deal to prove to myself and show Deke that I was feeling fine. I fooled nobody. Deke saw my plates going back hardly touched. A ship sighted through the salon window gave me an excuse to escape. A thoughtful steward had already set out the tinware in our cabin. I was down on my hands and knees. I wasn't sick; just prepared for emergency. The door opened. I heard Deke's familiar guffaw. That settled it. I kicked the pan under the bed.

"I'm no more sick than you are. Let's get out of here." That was my first and last experience.

We liked Boston Harbour, not for its beauty—it is beautiful enough—but because it made our heads throb with memories. Every hill had seen a victory, every building was historic, every wharf had had a tea party or something just as good. The old frigate *Constitution*, the glistening Bunker Hill Monument, were each good for a thrill.

I loved old Boston town from the start. Its narrow winding streets took hold of my imagination and helped me clothe the skeletons of history. There wasn't a spot in the old East End that I didn't know. I dreamed through its burying grounds, haunted its historic churches, and laid loving hands on houses once homes of the great. The old Hancock house especially appealed to me. Its bricks were made in England! Its "courses" laid in "British bond"! Whatever that was. England had never seemed so near or real.

Then there was that wider and, in a way, even more interesting Boston than Deke and I explored so thoroughly, and revered. Nahant, with its splendid beach, its singing rocks and

its historic homes; quaint and solemn Salem, musty, like a chest in an attic, with its old Custom House, the House of Seven Gables, and John Eliot's home; and Marblehead Neck, where we used to go to get marine forms for the laboratory at low tide—and at high, read about that poor duffer who was tarred and feathered and carried in a cart by the women of Marblehead! Whittier's old home was twice our goal of pilgrimage. We could walk to Lexington any Sunday afternoon; we knew it well. Concord—I can still feel the crunch of pine needles under my feet in Sleepy Hollow, and can see that granite boulder where Emerson sleeps, and Hawthorne's simple grave.

Yes, Deke and I hunted out all those places and many more. Many interesting experiences we had, and always the thrill. American literature and Colonial history took on a new meaning. I remember how fast my heart beat, when at a lecture in Harvard Hall one day, the professor, without a tremor in his voice—it did seem to me the occasion called for one—said, "And that battle, gentlemen, was fought with bullets made of the lead from the roof of this building." That was bringing things close.

We liked, above all things, to take the rattly old horse-car down over Charles Bridge on a Sunday morning, and on to the Common, and then walk up Beacon Hill to King's Chapel. What if the sermons were unorthodox? Wasn't there right down before us in that quaint old box-pew Oliver Wendell Holmes? Hadn't we called for "Elsie Venner" a thousand times in playing "Authors"? We used to focus our eyes on him for an hour at a time and bless every wrinkle in his kindly face.

Now and then we got a glimpse of James Russell Lowell. Lowell was a distinct shock. I mean the first time I ever saw him. I got used to him of course. I had laughed over "Big-low Papers" back on the farm, curled up in front of the fire, with the snow beating against the window. His "Vision of Sir Launfal" had delighted me, though it never moved me as

did Holmes' masterpiece, "The Chambered Nautilus." Holmes looked the part I had assigned him. I don't know just what idea I had formed of Lowell, but I repeat that I was shocked to find him with an effeminately cut beard and his hair parted in the middle, and dressed in a fancy waistcoat, striped trousers and coloured spats.

"Great Lord!" I said to Deke. "The man's a dude! That can't be Lowell."

Deke made excuses. "Oh, well," he said, "he is just back from the Court of St. James. He's got to wear his London clothes out." But I could hardly forgive him.

The spirit of Longfellow surrounded us. It wasn't so much that wonderful old Craigie House was almost within a stone's throw of our room, as that nearly all the things he talked about in his verses lay scattered about us. It made them real and wonderfully vivid. I wonder if Harvard men these days care for such things. Do they ever go pilgrimaging to Plymouth Rock, to Salem, to Concord? or read "Elsie Venner"?

That brings me to a real confession. My name was in the register, and I even attained the glory of a room in the Yard. But, hang it all, I never felt that I was really a Harvard student. I was only a graduate student, a kind of outsider, clinging to the coat-tails of the envied men on the inside. I used to wonder how it would feel to be a freshman. I wondered if I would have "gone out" for this or for that. Could I have "made" the Crimson? Well, I was certain of one thing—were I an undergraduate I would have worked hard to be one of that chosen band which is the works of the machine. I would not have been content to be merely an onlooker.

But there was plenty to do, and I made the most of my days. They were too short and went altogether too fast.

Deke and I had felt pretty big out in Boston Harbour as our ship steamed in. Boston itself sapped a little of our courage. But the Yard, its splendid elms, the towers of old Gore hill, the vines on Massachusetts and Harvard, Hollis and

Stoughton, and Holworthy, and the towers of Memorial—well, we began to tremble a bit. Still . . . isn't it great? we asked each other. And agreed unanimously.

We were early. The Yard was quiet. Memorial hadn't opened yet. We drifted about drinking it all in, glad we were there, wondering how it would all come out. Could we fit into this great machine? Or would it swallow us up? At last, tired and making little headway, for everything seemed closed, we dropped down a by-street and into a curious old tea-room. Ordered poached eggs, which I considered most effeminate at that time. Eggs should be either boiled hard, or fried on both sides. I suppose we ordered poached eggs in imitation of a dapper little man in front of us.

We knew he was looking us over, and it seemed to take him only about a minute for the inspection.

"Just arrived, eh?" This to neither of us in particular.

Deke took the bit. "Yes, we've only been here three hours. I suppose you see many green fellows around here at this time of the year."

"Oh, yes," our inspector said, "we see all kinds of them. We get used to them." Deke looked at me, as much as to say, does he include us?

But before we had finished our eggs, this same little man had put us on our feet. He proved to be an assistant in the Recorder's office. Before night we had the key to the humblest dormitory in the whole Harvard system, and had already contracted a year's rental for furniture. We had filed our bond and had signed up for Memorial Hall board. We had started.

I can't imagine you would be interested in our room. Rooms in College House were not very interesting those days. For an outlay of fourteen dollars we had a cheap rug, a desk, a lamp, two chairs, a double washstand, and a double bed and mattress. To Deke it seemed like a lot of money to spend—"just for rent!" But here again, as in the matter of sailing the seas, I had the advantage of him, having furnished an

"apartment" in St. Louis. Though I wouldn't have told him for anything.

The sordidness of College House depressed me more and more. I knew that its accommodations fitted my pocketbook, but I hadn't consorted with poverty row at Lanyon, and I didn't care to room in that row at Cambridge. I was a first class, fresh-water snob. I was ambitious. And I wanted to get nearer the heartbeat of the place. I envied men who lived in the Yard.

So before the Christmas vacation had arrived I had parted company with Deke. We were both sorry. I took quarters on the top floor of Weld. In the midst of things now, I thought. I grew exceedingly fond of that room in Weld. I liked the idea of having it all to myself. I could "sport my oak"—cut myself off entirely from my neighbours. They were all underclassmen and though there was little difference in age, I left they had the advantage of me. They were in Harvard; I was at Harvard. Their loyalty, no doubt, was different from mine. But I found to my amazement that when it came to the supreme moment at a football game my lungs were as good as the best of them. Why, Deke and I hugged each other that day when Dudley Dean and Jimmy Lee helped Harvard to a twelve to six victory over Yale. Yale had meant nothing to me before, but in the midst of that game it became a hateful thing, something to be choked, mangled, killed.

I had laid out an ample programme for myself. As yet I had no goal, so I loaded a blunderbuss. I wanted to bring something down though I didn't know what. Before the first week was finished I realised, not so much how little I knew—there was some excuse for that, in fact I was there to remedy that—as my inability to study. I would pick up a book—the words were clear enough—but I couldn't concentrate my mind. My attention was here, there, everywhere. I couldn't read a Latin charter with Marie's heart throbbing against mine.

Bones were both dry and dead when their curves became those of Polly O'Brien. What in the name of all that was learned had Helen to do with the circulatory system of an embryonic dog-fish? And I would get mad at myself and swear and pace the floor and poke my fire, and wish I had never come to Cambridge.

"Why should I be ambitious?" I would say to myself. "I can't be a Harvard professor. Why not be content to trade with Indians, or teach school at King's Mounds?" The whole thing was beyond me. A mother's love had grossly exaggerated my talent and ability. Father knew best—I should have stuck to the farm. But more often I agreed with Mother's estimate.

What did the man mean anyhow, asking us to read one hundred and nine pages of Latin before next Tuesday? That was a term's work back in Lanyon. Did he think reading Latin charters in Stubb's Selected as easy as reading a newspaper or listening to a performance in the Howard Athenaeum? But I'd peg away at the countless lines of meaningless words. In three months I had learned Latin anew. It was a sink or swim game, that course, the Constitutional History of England. Just why I took it, I don't know. I never did quite know. It hadn't anything to do with bones. I couldn't have taken it as mental discipline. My mind was already disciplined! Why, all my life I'd been taking things I didn't like just for the sake of mental discipline. In a week Harvard showed me how little mental discipline I really had had. But I fought on, and at the end of the year got my reward by seeing my name on the printed honour roll.

The year wore on, broadening, and deepening—and I began to find myself. Long hours, day after day, I worked over skeletons on the top floor of the old Agassiz museum. What a wonderful place it seemed! There could be nothing in the world so interesting as that course in Comparative Osteology, unless it be that other course, in another wing of the museum,

which dealt with the comparative anatomy of vertebrates. I began that course with diffidence and finished it a slave. I felt that now I was getting down to the bottom of things.

But even before the inevitable came, I had matched my dogma and my faith against expert opinion. Expert opinion had won. Much of my faith and most of my dogma had gone by the board. The day that happened marks the end of an epoch in my life.

It all comes back to me. Being a graduate student, I had the run of the stack-rooms of Gore Hall, the University library. And there Sunday afternoons often found me. On such days I was a literary tramp, an aimless wanderer among the brains of men absent and gone. I explored the stack as I had explored the bottom of the Mud Hole. I tried never to jump in twice in the same place. I tried always to bring up something from the bottom.

A warm rain was unmercifully pelting the few leaves that still clung to the elms. The stack was deserted as far as I know.

Down one of the long corridors and into an alley as yet unexplored, I stopped by chance in front of a complete set of Huxley. I was surprised that Huxley was such a voluminous writer. I only knew his book on hygiene. Surely no scientist could have written all those books! It must be some other Huxley. I picked a volume at random and turned to the title page. Same Huxley, apparently. I opened the book at random and my eyes fell on these words:

"Yet this strange man [Paul], because he has a vision one day, at once, and with equally headlong zeal, flies to the opposite pole of opinion. And he is most careful to tell us that he abstained from any re-examination of the facts.

"I do not presume to quarrel with Paul's procedure. If it satisfied him, that was his affair; and, if it satisfies any one else, I am not called upon to dispute the right of that person to be satisfied. But I certainly have the right to say that

it would not satisfy me, in like case; that I should be very much ashamed to pretend that it could, or ought to, satisfy me; and that I can entertain but a very low estimate of the value of the evidence of people who are to be satisfied in this fashion, when questions of objective fact, in which their faith is interested, are concerned."

I read the two paragraphs again; and a third time. I knew Huxley as a reputable scientist. I assumed that he was a Christian.

"Well, it beats everything," I declared to myself. I couldn't make it out. It seemed incomprehensible that Huxley could have written this.

I returned to the corridor, seated myself in the little chair in front of the table, and read, and read. First, that whole essay. Then another. I lost all sense of time, place, space, until at last I was called back to self by the familiar, cheery cry ringing up from below, "Li-bra-ry clo-sed, Li-bra-ry clo-sed."

That night high up in Weld in front of my fire I tried to puzzle it out. Huxley *dares* think such things, and a reputable firm *dares* print them. Surely I, poor insignificant I, have a right to think.

And I did think. I had never felt that way before. I had never realised that I dared to think about these things.

I felt as if a load had been lifted from me. I had no idea where it would lead—nor for the time did I care—but I felt mentally free for the first time in my life. And deep within me I knew what Huxley meant when he said that to him the chiefest good was freedom to learn, to think, and to say what he pleased when he pleased! Until now I had not dared hope for such freedom.

Was Christ born of a virgin? *Had* the miracles really happened? After all, what was the authority for these things? The Bible wasn't written in English. It came to us via Greek. What was it before it was Greek? Surely Moses and the Prophets and Paul and Peter had not all spoken Greek. Did

they really write these things down? Was there a copy of "Job" in any library in the world, or of the book as Job wrote it? Were the original Paul's "Epistles" still in existence? How many years had elapsed between his sermon in the Forum and its writing down as we now have it—one year, fifty years, a hundred? I didn't know. Nobody had ever talked about these things to us. And I wondered why so much had been made of faith and so little of facts. My whole religious structure tottered. All my life I had tried to build up an edifice that would hold within it a nook for me. Had I built on sand?

That was a memorable rainy day; and I was grateful to Huxley. I might have to pay a price for doubting, but it would be paid by a free man, not a bondman.

The bones of my dead faith began to be clothed with the realities sensed by my living body.

I will not say that during these three years at Cambridge I had no objective, no definite goal. I know now that I did not, that I was a creature of circumstances, a sport of fate. But I did not know it then. I thought I held destiny in my hand and was doing what I could to assist in bringing it all to pass.

Most of the world still looked askance at the theory of evolution. You could believe in evolution and be damned, or you could cast it out and be saved. Even at Harvard many good souls fought with themselves the fight of faith versus the evidence of the eyes. But the issue was clear-cut. You could take your choice.

The history of the Cosmic universe was written in the first Chapter of Genesis. There it was. It was the Bible. Doubt one word, reject one chapter, where will it lead you to? No, no, you couldn't do that. Take it all—or leave it. Perhaps that is why so many left it. Christianity carries greater burdens than the Cross—His Word was encumbered by the age-old superstitions of primitive man.

On the other side was the Museum, its laboratories, workshops, class rooms, libraries, exhibition halls. On every hand

a flat contradiction of the first Chapter of Genesis. You could see these things, feel them, touch them, taste them, smell them, hear them. There they were. Were you to believe the evidence of your own eyes, or some one's say-so? Does God ask us to accept His words as they come fresh to us, day by day, or the story which superstition has built up? We cannot believe that God is a hypocrite—to say one thing in nature, another in man-made book.

I confess I worried very little about it. Life was too rich and full. I had my friends. My horizon was always broadening. The days never were long enough.

I decided to try for a doctorate in the Department of Zoology. My research work was to be on the morphology of the skull. I was recommended to do some of my work in the Medical School, and for two years I spent half my time there studying anatomy.

The Medical School was another inspiration. I thought men in Cambridge worked hard, but here I found a new kind of energy and determination. I had never before heard students applaud a lecturer. No seats were assigned. The front benches in the anatomy amphitheatre were as popular as the front rows in the Howard. I used to get up at seven o'clock so as to reach Boston in time to get a front seat in that hall.

The microscope came to have a new meaning. We were handling human tissue now. There is a vast difference between studying the stomach of a crayfish and your own. The processes, perhaps most wonderful in all nature, that take place in the fertilisation of the ovum have a new meaning when you realise that the egg under your lens when fertilised might yield a Confucius, a Mohamet, an Alexander the Great, or a George Washington. How poor and tame all my work with tadpoles and fishworms and cats seemed.

Helen wrote—"You seem to be growing away from me." Or—"I can't follow you in this maze of activity and new interests. Why am I not there with you?"

Well, why wasn't she? What was she doing? Learning to cook, to sew, to take care of a poor man's house, to feed an infant? I did not know. I suppose I didn't think much about it.

But I was growing away from her. I didn't intend to. What was I to do? Go back? Give it all up? I was in a forest and could see no way out. But there were trails, and I took such as seemed inviting, believing that sometime, at the end of some one of them, I would find Helen and that we would marry and be happy ever after.

Just then I was too busy trying to learn how to earn the earthly goods that I might her endow. At any rate, that was part of my excuse. Of the many things that presented themselves, I was choosing those which seemed most pressing, my choice being determined by the results of my previous experiments and experience.

CHAPTER XII

THE RELIGIONS CLUB

AND so my life at Harvard flowed on—serene, placid, intense. It was all so splendid. So real in its fulfilment of my dreams. My soul was exalted to the skies. I knew all that I had missed—all that was denied me because I could never be an undergraduate. But I was *at* Harvard. I was part of that great human institution which has played its part so well in all that seems best and most worth-while in American history.

Veritas. Yes, truth *is* the greatest thing in the world, and Fate has actually given *me* the privilege of marching under its banner! Could I make myself worthy of that privilege? I could really sit at the table with the learned! I would not betray the trust.

But I always had the feeling of my fundamental unworthiness. I was acutely conscious of my handicap. I knew that I would have to fight hard. I would try. I would win! I knew that, too.

But how odious some of my life seemed! If I could only live it over again!

Ambition came to me in new guises. I would make myself over again, and when I left Cambridge I would be worthy. I felt confident of my ability. There were times when . . . Why not? Here was So and So, and So and So—*they* had come up out of the West—green. . . . Were they really so green as I? Well, at any rate there was So and So—he had been an Ohio farmer boy. Now he was a full professor in Harvard University! Why not I? Why not!

I could see no reason why I should not aspire to that. That

was the secret ambition I nursed all those months. With it I began my second year.

But I couldn't hold myself down to that goal. Could I if I had not met Alexandra Lanfiere? You may know. I do not. But of this I am certain—a mere . . . Here it is again—what shall I call it? Accident, chance, Fate, luck—destiny? Whatever it was, it changed the whole course of my life. I think that is not too strong. At any rate I am forced to that conclusion, as I look back over those years.

Perhaps, after all, had I never known Alexandra Lanfiere, I might have gone on. . . . But no, that seems hardly possible—certainly very improbable.

How much I owe you, my dear! Whatever else my life might have been, whatever else I might have done—to you, Alexandra Lanfiere, I owe more than one life of gratefulness can repay. And yet you say that you too feel the same way! And I met you by—accident. . . . Destiny? Whatever it was, I thank it.

It was December second. I know the date, for I still have the examination paper.

Hard and faithful work had given me standing as a “deserving” graduate student. So I was permitted to proctor during examinations—simple, easy work, and decently remunerative. I hadn't much money left and it seemed wise to turn to anything that would bring in some.

I was proctoring in Religions 2b—December second. Hour exam. After the questions and blue-books had been distributed and the students had settled down to work, old Professor Bede—well known by name to me, although I had never met him—entered, looked about to see that everything was all right, and came over to the corner where I stood and began to talk to me. I made some comment on one of the questions. It had to do with primitive conceptions of animism. He seemed interested. It needed little encouragement to set me going in earnest. Here was a chance to talk with the distinguished Pro-

fessor of Natural Religions. I was telling him something he didn't know. Without my being conscious of it I became absorbed in reviewing some of my Indian experiences.

The first thing we knew—I think he was as surprised as I—the bell rang. The hour was up. It was not a large class—all advanced students. Half had already finished and left the hall on tiptoes. I gathered up the blue-books and put them on Professor Bede's desk. Then he held out his hand and said, "I thank you. You have given me a new point of view this morning. You talk as an Indian might."

Then came the invitation, spontaneous, impulsive. Would I care to go with him that night to a meeting of the Religions Club—a peripatetic society, he explained, meeting in homes, generally in Boston, of the interested well-to-do. I accepted. Curiosity alone would have prompted that. And would I also, asked the Professor, come to his house that night at seven-thirty, to ride into Boston with him in his carriage? That invitation also I accepted of course.

Our conversation on Indians was continued in his carriage.

Almost before I knew it I was in the drawing-room of a house on Commonwealth Avenue, near the Garden. I was presented to many people, none of whose names I remember. When Professor Bede rapped on the table for order I dropped into a chair. I had had no idea that my sponsor was the President of the club.

I was rather bewildered and somewhat elated. It was at least a novel experience that I could make a bit of social capital out of, back in Lanyon.

A queer lot of people. High-browed men, bald or grey many of them. Two or three very short-haired women. More expanse of matronly bosom than I had ever blushed upon before. The crowd seemed old—very few under thirty. A venerable crowd. Not decrepit or anything of that sort. Rather, they seemed to look down on things as from the top of a pyramid of life. Their vocabulary was not mine. They talked of religions in a shockingly free and easy way. They talked

about Christianity, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Moham-medanism, all in the same breath. No distinction was noticeable in tone or manner when Christianity was mentioned. I confess I was shocked when Christ was spoken of as one of the world's "great ethical teachers."

I was rather ill at ease. I should have felt more at home if only they had had a skeleton in some corner. I was at home with bones. I had scarcely noticed individuals so far—had merely taken them *en masse* and for granted.

Curious, isn't it, what one's mind does with one? This grey-haired patriarch from Yale, guest of honour and speaker, was drooling along about the Genetic History of the Development of the Idea of Reincarnation. And I—was thinking about Marie! Hadn't thought of Marie for weeks. I must have blushed, sighed or something; I've no idea now. Perhaps I fidgeted. The lady next me whispered, "I am afraid you are not interested?"

"Very much," I protested, hardly daring to look at her. I mentally cursed Polly and brought myself back to the dawn of human superstitions. I also gave the lady at my side distinctly to understand that I had too much respect for the speaker to attempt conversation. I didn't tell her anything like that, of course. I just let her know it by a kind of finality, I think, that I put into the "Very much."

In some way I became conscious that she felt the rebuke. Then I cursed myself. But I became conscious, too—not definitely conscious, but in a vague, yet real way—that there was some sort of sympathetic bond between that woman and me. It was as if she had made a tiny venture to be polite—and I had rebuked her! I had lost an opportunity to be a gentleman—and I was disgusted with myself. Somehow that woman—I will not say had acquired a sudden interest in me—had become an object of interest to me.

My reaction was natural, I think. I took the first opportunity to get a good look at her. I did not remember having been

presented to her, or that I had ever seen her before. She was neither tall nor short—about Polly O'Brien's build. Her hair was crow black—and rather fluffy, like Polly's. It appealed to me—the hair. It was just that kind of tantalising hair. Her bare arms and shoulders were not snowy white—as Polly's were—but of the colour of cream—and I thought would feel like velvet. And then I brought myself up sharply. I simply must listen to the lecture.

And then I noticed her eyes. Rather deep set, rather far apart and—why they were as black as her hair! Wonderful eyes, I thought. In fact, I found myself thinking a great deal all at once. I made the very hasty generalisation that the husband of this woman must be fortunate—and probably jealous. Her dress was remarkable, quite beyond my ability to describe. I knew little of fashion and such things. I couldn't analyse them. But somehow I had a notion that this dress was out of the ordinary. It pleased me. Very. It was delicate—yet bold—gold upon green—with a broad sash of oriental-looking stuff of rich browns. All filmy, as though spun about her. I found myself comparing it with other dresses in the room. The others were just dresses.

But, after all, it was her eyes. They seemed never still a moment. They were not restless, they just danced. I hadn't imagined there could be such a pair of eyes in Boston. Perhaps she was a visitor, too. Where could she have come from? The more I puzzled about her, the more I was reminded of Marie. That was it! This woman must be a foreigner! But what? She couldn't be German. Italian! Possibly. But hers was not the beauty of any Italian woman I had ever seen—true, they were mostly Madonnas. I gave it up. I only knew I just wanted to look at her. I hope she didn't notice my rudeness. But I did want her to be conscious of my existence.

I *must* listen. Probably Professor Bede will talk about this address on the way back to Cambridge—I *must* hear what the speaker says. I tried the formula that helps me get to sleep.

Sometimes I go to bed with a whole Pandora's box of ideas—and I work over them awhile—and tire of them. But they stick around, even though they know they've out-stayed their welcome. Then I get angry and say: "Get out of here every last damned one of you. Get out, I say. I've got to go to sleep. I've got work to do in the morning. I can't fool round here all night with you bugs, you know. GET OUT." A moment later I am asleep.

So it was then. A moment later I heard the Professor say: ". . . but phylogenetically, in its morphological development, the *anlage*—as the Germans would say—of the hypothesis of reincarnation is homologous to . . ."

Really this was too much. Why doesn't the old fool stick to the text? Why does he ring in biologic terms in describing psychologic phenomena? Why . . . Oh, damn reincarnation anyway. . . . And my mind got to muttering over a sentence in brother Bill's prospectus—Bill was a book agent that summer, made sixteen dollars wearing out eighteen dollars' worth of shoes—"Why Some Succeed Where Others Fail." For two whole minutes that sentence romped through my mind. Followed by "Magical, tragical, compound soap!" Great hat! I hadn't thought of that since the Pike-days when a street soap fakir came to Markersburg. "The *anlage* of . . . is homologous too . . . Why, confound that man! I bet he doesn't know the difference between homo- and analogous; wouldn't know 'em apart if he found 'em in the middle of the street.

My mind, my attention, my whole and undivided interest, was centred on this brunette Polly O'Brien. I couldn't help it. So I gave myself up to it. It was as if I had decided I wouldn't go to sleep for awhile—I no longer said "GET OUT."

Long before I thought he would the speaker finished. Applause—refined—Bostonesque. A discussion followed. It didn't interest me. I wasn't paying attention.

When I heard my name spoken by Professor Bede I gathered as soon as I got my wits about me, that he was calling

on me to make some "remarks." He understood, he said, that I had spent much time among the Indians, and wouldn't I please tell the members of the Club something about the religious beliefs and practices of our Indians?

I wished I had a piece of Alice's mushroom. My heart stopped beating. All the blood in my body seemed to be in my face.

"By Hen! I like his nerve," I muttered under my breath. Even yet I wasn't even considering talking. I must be dreaming. But, no, the chairman was still on his feet, looking straight at me. A prayer-meeting hush settled down over the audience. I could feel every eye turned on the target indicated by Professor Bede's steady gaze. I was going through the agonies of a man who faces thirty rifles, waiting for the command to fire. Hang it all! Why don't they shoot? Then my brunette Polly O'Brien laid her hand as lightly as a breath-feather on my sleeve and whispered: "Please: I should like so much to hear you."

I would have made all kinds of a monkey of myself for her sake—just because she put it that way. That is instinct. It was as though she had touched a spring in me over which I had no control. That force put me on my feet—and loosened my tongue.

I floundered a bit but pretty soon the words came easily. Was it my own voice that was pushing on? I don't know what I said. I only knew that something was expected of me and that if it was in me it would come out. I concluded by singing some "Medicine" songs in Arapaho—a tongue as soft as Italian.

As the crowd broke for the informal supper I was embarrassed to find myself the object of almost as much attention as the real speaker of the evening. I admit I was pleased by the nice things they said to me. But I knew that whatever merit I had earned was not mine but—Hers, and I was glad for Her sake that I had done well. When the little lady herself came up and said: "Thank you, *so much!*" I felt I had been

adopted right then and there by a glorious fairy. I felt rather sorry for the Yale professor.

Nothing more happened that mattered. Only, as I was leaving, my fairy again found me and said: "The next meeting is to be at my house. I hope you may be able to come?"

Old Professor Bede at last was ready to start back to Cambridge. But I made some excuse. I didn't want to talk. I wanted to be alone. I would feel freer in the crowded street car. I might, that night as I bumped over the Charles river bridge, have had the car all to myself, so unconscious was I of the existence of fellow travellers. I did not quite know what had happened. But I felt as a miner must when his pick strikes a vein with a tiny streak of something suggestive in it. What was it in that quartz? Where did the vein lead to?

That was the question that tossed me about far into the night. I made no effort to drive it out. Where did that vein lead to?

True, I didn't even know the lady's name. That she was a Personage was evident. There was less doubt—there was no doubt at all—that I was a poor, obscure graduate student, partly working my way through school—almost fresh from the Pike. All that summer I had been a "hired-hand" on Father's farm!

A silly ass I am and no mistake! Gone daffy because a strange woman looks at you twice! And you don't know who she is—you poor fool!

Again and again I assured myself that she—the mysterious lady—couldn't possibly mean anything to me. And yet, something within me scented adventure, and scouted. . . . I didn't know what. But something.

Something would come out of all this. Something shall. . . . Can't! Will. . . . Must!

And I slept.

The old Yard looked a little different next morning. It didn't seem quite so much a part of me. It was as though something had come between us.

Would the month never end? Would the Religions Club ever hold another meeting?

In due time I received, straight from her own very hands, an invitation, signed:

"Your friend,
"ALEXANDRA LANFIERE."

I began to think about the cut of my dress suit. It was the best to be had in Lanyon—and only a little over three years old. I had taken good care of it. But was it quite the right thing for Boston society? Of course I didn't need a dress suit very often—in fact, I'd only had it on four times since Commencement at Lanyon. It seemed a shame to throw it away. It was such a good suit—silk lined and all the fancy trimmings with braid down the sides of the pants. A little odour of moth balls. I knew Father would scold terribly if I even thought of getting a new one. I asked Deke what to do.

"Well," he said, "it's up to you. I'll admit the sleeves are a little short and your legs are a little long, and it might be a little looser under the arms. But it certainly would be a crime to buy a new one. What do you want it for anyhow? You haven't as much use for a new dress suit as you have for a yellow dog."

"But," I protested, "I can sell the old one to Poco."

Poco was a cast-off clothing scavenger who haunted the steps of Memorial. In a hang-dog tone he would say as we came by, "Any ole clo's to sell, shentlemens?" I hated to do business with Poco. I had an instinctive aversion for him.

I spent a whole day trying to tighten up my courage. As I left Memorial that night I passed the sign to Poco. He followed me up the four flights of Weld and I got out the crowning glory of my wardrobe. He fingered the garment rather casually, it seemed to me.

"Well, how much?" I asked.

"Two tollars unt fifty cents iss all I can gif." I felt like

throwing the skunk out of the window. I wouldn't have had him contaminate my room for two dollars and a half.

"Good Lord, man," I exploded, "do you know what that suit cost me? Twenty-seven dollars and a half!"

"I cannot gif any more. I offer you too much as it iss."

I opened the door and let him out. I would save that suit to bury a dog in rather than let Poco touch it again, even though he gave me all that Father had paid for it.

Later in the evening a man from Beck Hall came to my room. The fact that he came from Beck implied wealth, fast living, bull-pups, perhaps a yacht, maybe an apartment in Boston with a lady. But mid-year exams. were at hand and Beck Hall men must be tutored, and I needed all the money I could get. They had money, I had brains.

We went on with our drill for three long hours. He was a bright fellow with a quick, eager mind. He admitted that he had hardly opened a book during the year, had no notes worth speaking of, had cut his classes to the limit. Yet, at the end of three hours, this young New Yorker, son of one of the great railway kings of America, was in shape to go into the examination in Natural History next morning, and make a mark that would be nearly as good as one that I might make. He paid me the customary fee and got up to go.

"By the way, Mr. Walters," I tried to be casual, "who made that suit for you?"

"Smithfield of Park Row. Good night."

I wrote the address down.

Yes, Smithfield made evening clothes. And the price? Well, for me they would make a suit for eighty-five dollars. I gasped. I hadn't imagined that anybody in the world would pay that much for a suit of clothes. But I didn't have the nerve to tell Smithfield so. I surrendered: I would do more tutoring and make up for it.

Meanwhile I made such inquiries as I dared about the Lanfieres. I didn't get far, because I had no excuse for wanting

to know. What I learned. . . . Well, it was not very reassuring. It all tended to deepen my conviction, strong enough from the start, that the mysterious lady belonged to another world—a world of which I had been permitted only a glimpse, and that purely fortuitous—that while proctoring, I had made a momentary hit with Professor Bede.

Did I give up? Did I lose interest? On the contrary. Something pushed me on—somewhere, I felt certain. Where? That must be left for the future. For the present I was content to let the matter rest that way.

Mr. Lanfiere, I was told, was the powerful, much hated and feared owner of several newspapers and one or two magazines, among them the *Puritan Weekly*, a journal of power in New England. Mrs. Lanfiere was a foreigner. I knew it from the start! Mr. Lanfiere had married her when he was a student at Oxford—had met her in Paris. He was never seen in society—at least not the sphere over which his wife presided. Mrs. Lanfiere was Polish, a brilliant linguist, I learned later, with a wide knowledge of European literature. But it was enough at the time for me to know that she was from Poland—and that her name was Lanfiere. What did names matter, or even nationalities? Or even colour of skin? These prejudices are only mental and acquired. We don't come into the world with them.

It seemed to me then—and for months afterward—that I was always learning too much about Mrs. Lanfiere, and never getting close enough to her.

Again into Boston with Professor Bede. The old man's interest in me, it appeared, had not slumped. The day before the meeting I got a note from him, saying that he understood that I had been invited, and that if I would come to his house at the same hour, he would be glad to have me share his carriage. On the way in I wanted to talk of the Lanfieres. Professor Bede—wondering, no doubt, why I should want to know about them—preferred to have me talk of Indians. But it was the

same old story. All that I learned was disquieting. Yet . . . How shall I say it? Perhaps you understand just how I felt.

Our Indians, in fact all primitive communities, love the story of the Obstacle Race. The young culture-hero sets out on the great journey of life. He knows not the goal, only that there is a goal well worth the obstacles he must overcome. My obstacles seemed ever more and more difficult. The more unattainable the goal seemed, the more it was worth the fight. Do not misunderstand me, the thing was not at all in the foreground of my consciousness. I did not reason it all out that way. But there it all was—sensed.

Finally the carriage turned down Beacon Street and soon after stopped in front of the Lanfiere house. I remember just how it looked that night. The moon was shining and the ground was covered with snow. The house seemed wider than its neighbours. The lines were simpler and stronger. I could see all this by the flickering gas lamps and the light of the moon. There was no light in any window. This added to the . . . whatever it was that fascinated me.

After a while I found myself in a large drawing-room at the back of the house overlooking the Charles. It was not brilliantly lighted. This was what I noticed first. I think I had expected a blaze of lights. Somehow the room made a sensuous appeal. It had colour, rich and soft and harmonious. I thought of two poems at once—"The Sensitive Plant" and "Lalla Rookh." A fragrance that suggested the frankincense and myrrh of the Bible. And flowers—violets and gardenias. The charm of the room was so many sided that my untrained senses had neither the opportunity nor the capacity to unravel the impressions that knocked for admission. But they did come. And the effect was bewildering—yet entrancing. And I was pleased that it all seemed in keeping with this strange woman. The room itself was part of her—an expression of her charm, her appeal, her mystery.

She was here and there and everywhere, introducing people, making them feel at home—and yet I suspect causing each one

to feel that it was something of a privilege to be present. At any rate I felt that way.

Three things especially impressed me: the fireplace with blue Damascus tiles; the rich, inimitably coloured Chinese carpets; and a masterpiece mosaic—the head of a Greek Goddess in a laurel wreath, once the glory of a Pompeian Dives' home. These I shall never forget—nor my general impression of being in a house of unlimited wealth and luxurious taste.

Was there anything special about Mrs. Lanfiere's welcoming greeting that night? To that question I devoted my mental strength during the reading of the paper.

Not that the paper wasn't interesting. It was by a Philadelphian whose name was not familiar to me. There was a certain charm in his voice and a subtle way of expressing himself that held me. While I did not fully grasp all he was saying, I felt mentally stimulated and elated. He came to me out of a world unknown and brought something of its flavour with him. He talked of the philosophy of Lao-tsze. He shot way over me. I knew that; but I got the odour of sandalwood and heard the rustle of silk. When he finished I felt that I should like to know China.

I had taken pains to forestall a repetition of the still rather embarrassing episode of the previous meeting. I asked my hostess to see to it that I was not to be called upon to talk. She promised, "but on condition that sometime you will sing for me."

I must have looked as happy as I was, for she gave me a look of understanding. That was the trouble with this woman. She could tell you so much with her face, or rather with her eyes. Her mouth had much to do with it—and her chin! She could even talk with her hair.

I hadn't intended to be the last one to leave, hadn't deliberately lingered. But there I was, alone in that enchanted room, alone with Mrs. Lanfiere.

"And now come over here and sit down," she said, "and tell me about the Indians."

We sat down in front of that wonderful fireplace—and talked. But not much about the Indians. About everything.

"Do you smoke?"

I did, of course. But I declined.

"Then may I?"

Those quick eyes of hers read my face. "You have not often seen ladies smoke?"

No, I hadn't. The idea shocked me. Never had I seen a lady smoke. Grandmother had smoked a pipe—but that was different. Even Marie didn't smoke.

Well, it wasn't as bad as I had thought it would be. She was dainty about it, and it seemed so easy and natural that I was partly reconciled. It is because she is a foreigner, I thought; they are always doing strange things.

That was the excuse I made for her. You see, I wasn't quite sure about some of these things. I was hardly reconciled to the sensuous appeal the room itself made. As a boy I had been accustomed to a room full of flowers—but not flowers that had heavy odours. It was all right for Old Testament people to use frankincense and sandalwood—no doubt such odours were pleasing to the Lord. But my community considered such things effeminate and somehow wicked.

Then, too, Mrs. Lanfiere was a married woman, talking and laughing at night with a young man she had seen only once before. Was that right? Doubts like these winged through my mind only to be banished instantly—for, I said to myself, this woman may be an enchantress, but I am willing to take the risk. She must be quite respectable, else the Religions Club would not meet in her house.

I've often wondered what we said—I've only the vaguest recollection. But I do remember that I talked as I had never talked before. I *could* talk to her. She made it so possible, so easy, to be natural.

At last I got up to go. I was shocked to find that it was after two o'clock. I realised that I had passed an evening beyond me; from every point of view beyond me. And yet she had talked to me as though I were a man of intelligence, an equal. No great lady ever talked that way in any books that I had ever read. I could have blessed her for it.

I did bless her. She might be an enchantress. . . . I thanked her for it. I was grateful that she found me worthy of her time and of her company. I knew that I was not worthy. I would keep her from finding it out as long as I could. Meanwhile . . . Why cross bridges before we come to them, as Father used to say. Though really his practice did not take that turn.

When I took her hand to say good-bye I must have been looking at her hair. She gave my arm a pat. I could feel my face blush.

"Don't be foolish," she said. "You and I are going to be good friends."

"I hope we . . . May I come to see you?"

"Whenever you like."

That was a kind of frankness to which I was not accustomed. I must have looked puzzled. "I am always at home to my friends on Thursdays—but perhaps you will have tea with us some Sunday!"

Hang the woman! She could look right into a fellow's soul. I had rather lost my nerve when I realised how late it was. It came rushing back now.

"I should like nothing better." But at that I couldn't tear myself away. I wanted to kiss that wonderful woman—not in passion, but with a kind of dumb, blind adoration. For the life of me I couldn't have put out my hand—I shouldn't have dared trust myself.

"I hope I may see you very soon." That was all I could say. She dismissed me at the door with a smile that warmed me through and through, and the doorman led me down the corridor to the floor below.

As I trudged back the long three miles, I marvelled at the turn the conversation had taken. I had told that woman everything I knew! That very minute she knew dozens of things about me that even Mother didn't know. She knew what I thought about things; she knew of my loves and my hates—what pleased me and what displeased me. What amazed me most was that I had told her all about Marie, and about Polly, and about Helen—and she had not seemed a bit horrified or surprised. She seemed to understand, and she told me odd bits of her own life. It seemed she came of a noble family which still owned great estates in the Kingdom. She used to go back with her husband and her two children every summer. But her husband was too busy now to go anywhere. She didn't love Boston. But she was very, very fond of Boston. I had a feeling that she would be happy no matter where she was. She carried it within herself, and gave it out.

One thing struck me very forcibly—I had not felt foolish in this woman's presence. I was always fearful lest I should, afraid that I would not know how to act, worried lest I do the wrong thing. You see, I had never had an experience of this sort before. Had never met a woman so far removed from the little world to which I belonged. I hedged her about with divinity—she was not a woman. She and Marie or Polly could have nothing in common, or even Helen Stratton. A woman like this, I somehow felt, could not be subject to ordinary human emotions. Yet something else told me that deep within her were all the emotions that move mortal men.

When should I see her again?

The chance came sooner than I had expected. On Saturday morning of the week following the second meeting of the Religions Club I got a note. "Won't you have supper with me to-morrow, Sunday, night?"

And thus began an eighteen months' intimacy which was the most precious possession of my Cambridge days. Alexandra

Lanfiere became to be more than Goddess. I would have gone to hell with her or for her. But she always kept me in my place. She always led me gently, lovingly back to earth. It was hard to leave it that way. I know that she was right, but it was very, very hard.

She understood. She knew even better than I the struggle that went on within me—the wild impulse to possess her—the calm certainty that I could not. Up to a certain point there was no barrier between us—and the way seemed open, clear to the end. But let me so much as lift a finger beyond—and I would find myself—I never knew quite how, but I was always aware of it—stopped before it became necessary for me to admit, even to myself, that I had been stopped.

She was more than inspiration. She was the source of life itself. From her, for the first time, I learned something of the real significance of the beauty of life. From her I learned that success is not alone and in itself life, but that life *is* life—life as we live it day by day, hour by hour.

CHAPTER XIII

ALEXANDRA LANFIERE

I SPENT the vacation of my second year in the hay and wheat fields and cut bands for a threshing machine. It was good to get back to nature—to be free to work and sweat without regard for collars or conventions. And I needed the money.

My body was in my work—and loved it—but my mind roamed. I had plenty of memories out of which I could and did build both solid structures and castles in Spain. I could be and was a real farm-hand—and did credit to my calling both in the field and at Mother's bountiful table. But I knew that I was more than a day labourer—that between my broad-rimmed straw hat and hobnailed shoes was a man who had travelled beyond the vision of his fellow labourers and had delved in a world of thought wholly beyond their ken. They sensed this too. I was one of them, plus something—just what, they did not know.

Somehow I had a presentiment that this would be my last summer in the fields as a farm-hand. There was no form of farm labour I couldn't do—or was unwilling to tackle. I had false pride about certain things—but none about honest work. Father was a clean man—and he was not afraid of it. There is squeamish work to be done about a farm. We were not squeamish.

But while I enjoyed the work and was proud of my strength and agility, manual labour and such knowledge as was needed to manage a farm did not promise enough. Work on a farm is never done—and what is there to show for it when it is? If Bill wanted to go on with the plough and the cows—well and

good—that was Bill's affair. What would Bill have to show for it at the end? My vocation lay in a different direction. What was impossible for me? Nothing that was worth while or really attractive. I was fitting myself for a realm of intelligence. I yearned to enter it.

I saw Helen but once, and only for a day. Three days after I got back to Lanyon she started West to spend the summer with her mother at Colorado Springs. We talked of my work—of her trip, the two things that interested us most. But of love—hardly one word. We assumed all that, took it all for granted. It would take care of itself.

Helen was very handsome now. I was proud of her. She would make a splendid wife—a noble mother.

We had only one misunderstanding. I began to tell her what Huxley had done for me. The look of scandalised grief that came over her made me stop. It would be enough later to tell her about such things. I became the conventional believer again—and Helen was reassured and happy.

But that episode dug into me. I couldn't help contrasting the restraint I felt in Helen's presence with the liberty of thought I enjoyed when with Mrs. Lanfiere. But I would see less of Mrs. Lanfiere when I returned to Cambridge. I must. It was not right.

As the summer wore away I longed to see her. But I said to myself that I wanted to get back to the microscope and scalpel. Life loomed up—ever larger, richer, more alluring. I wanted to finish my preparation—that I might begin to achieve.

No, I would not see too much of Mrs. Lanfiere.

By the end of September I was back at work again—a recluse in my room in Weld. And before a week had gone by I had found an excuse to call on Mrs. Lanfiere.

I couldn't help it. I wanted to help it. I knew that I ought to help it. It wasn't right. I didn't always feel that way, but most of the time I didn't stop to analyse my emotion.

Two impulses drove me forward. Two things occupied the foreground of my consciousness—work, Alexandra. Through one, my innermost self sought to obey the impulse to live; through the other, to attain immortality.

Life was interesting. Rich. Full.

At times I found myself wild with joy that I, the poor graduate student, dared even secretly to love this fascinating woman who was never twice alike, who seemed a diamond of unnumbered facets, each giving me a new excuse for admiring her.

She tolerated me. No, it was better than that. One night she told me that she never deliberately did a thing she did not want to do. Tolerated no regrets. Never held resentment. "It is enough that it is to-day." And then she went on to tell me how futile it is to hang on to one's hurts. I liked that philosophy.

But of more promise to me was the thought that a woman who does what she wills and wills as she chooses . . . Well, it seemed as if she must more than tolerate me. There were times when she frankly admitted it. Then I would get excited. Impulses within would struggle for expression. And then—without my knowing how she had done it—I would find myself telling her of my work with the microscope or perhaps crooning an Indian lullaby to little Pauline. She was too wise to oppose force to passion, too kind to disconcert me.

My little affairs of the heart, as I reviewed them in front of my fire, high up in Weld, seemed things apart. I was surprised that I could think over the events of the past so impersonally. They seemed to be as foreign to me as the doings of the Medes and Persians. Could there be anything in common between the me of now and the me of two years before? It was hard to reconcile the two personages.

My whole attitude toward life changed. I ran the whole gamut of human emotion. It seemed to me then that there could be no greater hope or deeper despair than that between which I swung like a pendulum. But I was chary of letting

her know the true estate of my feelings. Sometimes I was sure she guessed. She must have known.

Did she care for me? Did she love me? Many a time have I gone into Boston determined to stake all on one throw. I would find out. . . . And if she did love me—even as I loved her—what was to prevent . . . Why couldn't we go away somewhere and be happy—as people always do in wicked story books? What did ten years' difference in age amount to? Suppose she did have a husband and two children! What did anything matter if she loved me and I loved her?

Yes, I thought such things! And all the while knew how utterly impossible they were. I was love-mad.

But it was always the same. I went, vowing I'd declare my love; I came away chastened, humble—but happy, worshipful, my head in the clouds. The inspiration of her voice and her eyes would drive me for days, and I would work like a demon.

Even Deke noticed the change. We left Memorial one night arm in arm and strolled past the Washington Elm and on up Brattle Street toward Elmwood, a favourite walk of ours.

"What's got into you, Deke?" he asked.

"Do you notice the change?" My reply had given me away.

"Yes," he said, "and you know what I mean. What is it? Come on, now, tell me."

I couldn't. He wouldn't understand. Couldn't. When I realised how impossible it would be to make him understand—then I *was* in despair. But I did want to know what he had on his mind. What did he suspect. And so I lied.

"Nothing," I continued, "nothing has got into me. Maybe I'm working too hard. What do you mean?"

"Well, you're different. I don't know you any more. One minute you're a maudlin infant. Next, you're talking of things I've never heard of. One day your head is in the clouds; next day you look as though you hadn't a friend on earth!"

"Well?"

"Do you feel that way? *Are* you working too hard? I saw

you coming out of Fine Arts 2 the other day. How long have you been interested in Parthenons and Pantheons? Visit the Art Museum, eh?" There was a trace of scorn in his voice.

I wanted to tell him something of my happiness, something of my misery. But I couldn't bring myself to do it. I can understand why the Hindu allows the vulgar, wine-drinking, beef-eating foreigner to come only as far as the gate of the enclosure of his shrine. I felt that way with Deke. I could let him come up to the gate, but I couldn't take him into that shrine on Beacon Street.

"And you, old fellow?" I asked. I thought he winced a little. I certainly didn't mean to be patronising, but I guessed that I had touched a spring that meant something. He looked just a little bit . . .

Can the old boy . . .? Has he, too, a secret? Is he . . .

You see, my own experience had made me suspicious of my closest friend. True, there was nothing improper in my relationship with Alexandra Lanfiere. The impropriety was in my mind. I worshipped her—but I loved her madly, and would have risked all—including her all, of course—for her. Knowing this, I felt guilty. My inner self sensed danger, though no conflagration had been started. And I could suspect old Deke!

We didn't become estranged, Deke and I. Rather we drifted apart. It was as if two colts had started out to pull a load of learning. One grew up to be a steady-going farm horse, always reliable and always fair. The other got kinks in his system—sometimes he would pull the whole load, and the other horse along with it, but the next day he would jump out of the traces and frisk in the fields.

The same words no longer spelt the same things to us. As boys we had been in a way sufficient for each other. Beyond a few casual acquaintances made in the laboratories, and some rather formal friends whom we met at the monthly meetings of the Graduate or scientific clubs, we hadn't got far under the skin of our fellow men.

I had just put some coal on the fire. Deke had had dinner early, and I had missed him. In fact, I hadn't seen him all day. Both my doors were closed. I had on slippers and smoking jacket. Deke entered—he never knocked. He was puffing a bit. It was a long climb. Evidently he had hurried.

"I've heard you mention this name once or twice. Have you seen this?" waving the evening edition of the *Boston Standard* toward me.

I had not. Newspapers did not interest me those days. But when I did look one over I had a quick eye for one thing—the name "Lanfiere."

The first thing that struck me was the brevity of the notice and its unimportant position in the paper.

"At two o'clock this afternoon, while walking across the Common, Amy Mather, daughter of John Mather of Middlesex, shot herself through the head, and died on the way to the hospital. It is said that just before the shooting took place, she accused Paul Lanfiere of being the parent of her unborn child. Mr. Lanfiere, at the time, was on his way to New York."

Deke sat down in an easy chair, filled his pipe, and was watching me.

"Yes, I knew Amy Mather." I had to say something. "Reporter for this paper—Lanfiere's, I believe. You remember, Deke, that uprising among the Sioux last year? Well, she was sent out to get what she could from me. Her paper found out somehow that I had spent some time in Dakota. It was my first interview."

I preferred to develop that side of it. So I told Deke about this slender blonde who had found me in the laboratory one morning and how we had gone over into Norton's Woods and had munched cherries I had bought on the way, while we sat under a pine tree and talked Indians. We had become good friends in the two hours, and that was all I had seen of her.

I wanted to be alone, to think. But Deke stuck around, and

we fell to talking of other things—old times first, and then of our work.

Fortunately for me, a young man from the Back Bay came in just then. I had tutored him the night before. He had decided he would like another hour—didn't quite understand certain details of the circulatory system of the fishworm. Deke left.

I mentioned Amy Mather's death. I don't remember what he said or how he looked, but he gave me to understand that Amy Mather's death and Paul Lanfiere's affairs were no business of mine.

At last I was alone. I re-read the Amy Mather story. What was behind it all? I could only conjecture. A Boston Medical School student had told me that Lanfiere had seduced some girl, in her own house, after taking her home from a party he had given some stage people; and that she had twice threatened his life. But no hint of this had ever found its way into the papers.

I knew perfectly well that this tragedy was no business of mine—and that I was in no way involved—that Amy Mather's death could mean nothing to me. And yet I was afraid—perhaps worried expresses it better. But why? I couldn't for the life of me make out.

In spite of the clean character of my friendship with the Lanfiere household, I was at heart guilty of everything that I held to be dangerous. Because I was guilty in thought, I worried. I felt certain that Mr. Lanfiere must know that I had long been accepted in his house as an elder brother of the children and as an intimate friend of his wife. Did he think I was an altogether too frequent visitor? Or did he . . . Perhaps he was not even aware of my existence—or if he knew, didn't care. How could he not care? That was what I couldn't understand. The very idea ran counter to all my ideals of married life. If he knew—if he thought about it at all—he must feel sorry for a woman who, able to choose from the

bluest blood of Boston, finds pleasure in the friendship of a mere boy. That must be it—he considers me a mere boy—fit companion for children, temporary amusement for a woman tired of the conventions of society. Yes, that must be it. And I resented it. “Confound him,” I said to myself, “I am no mere boy. I will show him that I am a man.”

My impulse was to make for Beacon Street, but I did not dare.

Ten o'clock came. Most of the lights had gone out around the Yard. A rap at my door. I was afraid to open it. Who wanted to see me at that time of the night? A messenger boy handed me a note.

It was from Mrs. Lanfiere. “I want to see you very much,” she said.

In five minutes I was on my way to Beacon Street.

Her maid let me in and went with me to the third floor and down a long corridor to an L whose windows looked out over the Charles.

Alexandra was seated in a big chair in front of a low fire of copper-dyed oak. She pushed a heavy cushion towards me and I curled up at her feet. Her face was drawn and white. For a long time neither of us spoke.

“Well!”

“Yes, my dear,” she replied. “This *has* been a day.” My courage came back. With her I could have confronted the world.

“You didn’t mind my sending for you, did you? I simply had to. I stood it as long as I could. But after the children had gone to sleep I wanted some one to talk to. You really didn’t mind coming over, did you?”

Without waiting for the answer she knew I would make, she went on: “Is our sacrifice worth all this? Must there be so much ugliness in life? Civilised beings, we call ourselves! What utter savages we are once the veneer is scratched! Must we go on breeding savages? Is there no escape?”

I could think of nothing to say. She hardly seemed to be speaking to me, just moaning aloud her grief that life had to be so sordid.

Then she turned on her own sex. "Of course, Paul in the eyes of our clumsy moral law is a murderer. He took Amy's life. But why cannot women be gentlewomen—or at least thoroughbreds? It is always the same story. The girl was seduced! There *is* no such thing. Suppose Amy did have a little wine! She must have known herself. Paul takes her home. Kisses her. Of course. Why do girls wear low dresses? And she succumbs, just as he does. He wanted to explore; she wanted to be explored."

"Was this the only time Mr. Lanfiere had been with her?" I asked.

"I don't know. Repeatedly, I suppose. Till he tired of her. Motherhood impends. Her 'Christian' parents drive her from their home. Why not let matters take their course? But no. We prefer to compound a felony, become accessory to a crime, destroy life, and endanger another, rather than seem to countenance this natural expression of a natural instinct. Think of it! Amy Mather dead, a more worthy member of the Mather household, than Amy Mather, mother! Yet we clamour for population. Amy was a healthy young animal. Paul would have supported the child. It would have had as good prenatal advantages as any other child has. Why must we be eternally sacrificing ourselves to man-made conceptions of morality? Why must she try to kill Paul and, in doing so, kill herself?"

"Did she mean to kill him?" I asked.

"She did not mean to kill herself to-day. I know what happened from a servant who got it from an eye-witness. She threatened Paul, pointed her revolver at him, hoping to scare him into taking her back into favour and supporting her child. She had been driven from home. She was desperate—half insane. While Paul was struggling to save his own neck she pulled the trigger, and sealed her own fate instead of his."

"The ending was not at all as our International Lessons would have it, was it?"

"But that is not the point," she continued. "Paul *was* a contemptible brute. He should have stood by her. He didn't. But that doesn't excuse her. She played the game and lost. Why couldn't she have taken her own life quietly, respectably, if she found the conditions too hard?"

"But," I protested, "she was young—only twenty. Paul is a man. He knew how to take care of himself. She didn't. She was not responsible."

But my Divinity would not have it that way. "As long as women will throw themselves at men, they will fall. They must learn to take the consequences."

I didn't approve, of course. I couldn't agree with her. I had long since become accustomed to meeting old truths in new guises and new truths in unthought-of shapes in this house. But I couldn't help feeling that there had been only one villain in the day's tragedy, and that he had escaped unhurt. As long as man arrogates to himself the position of the stronger sex, he must measure up to the standard of his assumed superiority.

"But, my dear boy, what would you have done, in Paul's place?"

I tried to say that I would have taken care of the girl, shielded her, and protected her. And, in the first place, I would not have seduced her. But Alexandra broke in with "No, no. In Paul's place you would have done just what Paul did. You could not be in Paul's place without being Paul." I couldn't quite follow her here. But, of course, she must be right.

"Well," after a long silence, "I suppose we shall see less than ever of Paul. He hasn't been here for over two years. He rarely comes to the house, and then only late at night to meet with friends in his library."

Paul Lanfiere's library was an institution in Boston. It was a lofty vaulted room occupying the entire L beneath

Alexandra's apartment. It had its own entrance and vestibule. After nine o'clock no servant ever entered. Lanfiere's friends admitted themselves with keys which he furnished them. They were as much at home in that room as he was. No one was ever invited to smoke or to drink. Yet cigars, wines, spirits, books, talk, all were free to all who possessed the open-sesame. Men of renown, statesmen, politicians, scientists, writers, actors, clergymen, financiers, educators, came there and browsed among the books, talked with this or that friend, or joined in general conversation in front of a massive fireplace in which burned fragrant piñon from New Mexico.

There was a question I had long wanted to ask. I must have it answered. This seemed to be a good time. I stiffened my spine and looked up into those all-seeing, usually merry, black eyes. It required no courage to talk to them. "Tell me one thing, will you?"

She nodded.

"Does Mr. Lanfiere know? About me?"

"I am glad you asked. I wanted to tell you. It wasn't quite easy, and by that you must know that it was a little hard, for it is easy to talk to you." She took my hand from the arm of her chair and clasped it in both hers, then closed her eyes. "Yes, Paul knows. I told him all about it months ago. He is a gentleman. He understands. But he knows, too, that the wife of Cæsar will do no wrong. We talked it all over. He even offered to give me my freedom. But I wouldn't even discuss that with him."

"But, why not, wonderful woman?"

"Why, child, it is impossible. It is not even to be thought of. Besides I wouldn't ruin your life—not that way. I can look ahead. Could your love stand that test? Everything in life . . . And that is the tragedy for us poor mortals—the moment when we realise that everything in life is casual—momentary. Oh! I could. . . . But I won't. Better that you should never see me again, having only the memory

of me that you now have, than that this friendship should be spoilt."

"And Mr. Lanfiere," I questioned, "knows all that we are to each other? Is he never . . ."

She seemed to guess my meaning. "No, you are quite safe, at least as far as Mr. Lanfiere is concerned. I don't know if I can make you understand it all—but I will try. I was educated in Paris. I knew English literature well—for my father was an admirer of the English and had many English books in his library. I was full of silly ideas of romance.

"I met Paul Lanfiere at a ball at the American Embassy in Paris. He had just gone down from Oxford. I was fascinated with him at once. He seemed to have everything a girl could want—good looks, grace, refinement, a brilliant mind. He followed me everywhere about Paris—pursued me. Mother approved. I was flattered. We—mother and I—went back to Russia—he to London. We corresponded. In September he came to Warsaw. And we were married at the Cathedral."

I begged her to go on. "And then . . . ?"

"Well, my girlhood married his intellect, thinking it love. Why he married me, I never quite knew. We spent a month on the estate. He hunted and talked politics with the men. I saw little of him. I soon realised that I was only an episode in his life. He had married me because he fancied me—and marriage was the easiest way to get me.

"We came to Boston in November. The love I thought I bore him was cold—he had never nurtured it. As time went on he became more and more absorbed in his work. Power became his sole ambition—more power. When he shared my bed he was both giver and recipient. I had nothing to give. The degradation of it all! From fearing him I came to loathe the very idea of personal contact with him.

"But my pride forced me to play the game. We Poles have learned to wait—it has become second nature with us.

"The two children came—Pauline before the first year was

up. For six years I was their servant, nurse, sole companion. I never went out—rarely saw any one—lost the friends I had made. The summers were spent at Nahant or in Poland—the winters in Georgia or in Sicily. I read—like one possessed—everything that came into my hands.

“I suffered—alone. And played the game—as you say.

“Paul withdrew more and more from my life. I tried to forget that I was a woman.

“As the children grew older, they needed less care. I began to take a new interest in our home. Certain energies went into making it over. On three trips to Europe I ransacked the shops of London and Paris for . . .” She moved her arms about. “I picked these things up—a piece here, a piece there. We Slavs are too close to the Orient not to love colour—and beauty. And I was happy among these. . . . Toys—baubles—trappings! All unconsciously I was setting a stage. And I began to invite actors—interesting men and clever women. I would exhibit them, and by sharing in their interests find happiness for myself.

“Trappings, trappings, trappings! *A salon!* At last I could fool myself no longer. . . . I was unhappy—alone. I wearied of playing the game.

“Then you came! Right into my life. Do you remember that night—that night at Mrs. Harlow’s—when you said ‘Very much!’? I shall never forget the look you gave me. What happened to me? I cannot describe it. For just one second I was a primitive woman, and you a savage—and my master! In earlier days that would have been enough—you would have carried me off. . . .”

“I will now. It wouldn’t be wicked. . . .” But she wouldn’t let me finish.

“Don’t use that word. I hate it. Not wicked, dear—that is not what holds us close—yet apart. It is not that. When I ask you to come to me, it will not be wicked. It is only the consequence—it might bring harm to . . .”

“Whom? You? Me?”

"Helen!"

I was silenced.

"You see, we are not alone in this world. Even we cannot live to ourselves. We have rights and we have duties. We are part of an intricate fabric. Even if we would, we cannot live apart from it. If we would derive support from it, we must be strong enough to do our part."

"But . . . Isn't he jealous? How, oh, *how* can he give you up?"

She smiled sadly. "I have told you he knows no love—only promiscuous passion. He hunts in the modern jungle—his biggest game is the youngest."

"But would he be jealous if . . ."

"Only if it interfered with his two great passions: woman and power. Not otherwise. But even as he is, he has some sense of fairness. He was born a gentleman. And there is yet time, my dear." She gave my hand a little pat. "Meanwhile, we must be . . . Let us see what the Gods will for us to do."

Meanwhile . . . Let us see what the Gods will for us to do!

What did she mean?

Long ago I had been given the run of the nursery and was introduced to little Paul and Pauline as a friend of their mother's who would like, if they would allow me now and then, to see life through their own youthful, truthful eyes. I was a little surprised at this. You see, all the time I was proceeding on the assumption, the result of my Lanyon training, that I was a snake in the house because I had loved a wife and a mother. I knew I had done no intentional wrong. But there I was.

There was something about the nursery that dispelled these ideas. One was simple and natural. We played hard at times, all four of us. Could I have such children? Was there an-

other woman in the world like this Little Mother? Would Helen . . . But somehow I could not seem to go on with that idea. Helen was back there in Ohio reading E. P. Roe or Ouida—or she was buggy-riding along a country lane with some clodhopper, going to a circus or a dance! And he would probably want to make love to her all the way home.

"Brother, big Brother of my Sister," said little Paul one night—for he had taken up certain Indian phrases I often used—"tell us about the time you got on that old buffalo and swam the Missouri River and climbed the Rocky Mountains and then jumped clear into the Pacific Ocean and rescued a girl from the jaws of a whale."

"No, no," said Pauline. "Tell me what little Indian girls are like. Tell me more about Red Wing."

And I would tell an Indian story, my imagination running riot. I had always been afraid of it before. It had been repressed and stifled, or at best only allowed to unrein itself when I was reading.

I had heard much about city boys. Paul wasn't anything like that. His mind was not at all what mine had been at the same age. Somehow it seemed of a different fibre—cleaner, finer. And it was so direct.

I remember one night particularly—I can see the picture now. Pauline was curled up in her mother's lap. Paul and I had been playing Indian. "Would you be sorry," Mrs. Lanfiere was saying to Paul, "if Big Brother were to leave you?"

"But he won't, Mother."

"But if he should—would you miss him?"

"Mamma," broke in Pauline, "I'd cry if you should leave us and I would feel an awful big hurt."

"What would you do, my pet?" asked the mother.

"I would do the best I could without you, Mother, but please don't leave us and please don't let Big Brother go away."

Why couldn't it go on like that forever? I didn't want to leave Cambridge. Just across the river was about all there

was in the world for me. But the time came to leave. Mid-May came, and with it summer. Cambridge has a way of skipping spring. Winter hangs on and on, the trees still leafless. And the next day it is summer, and perfect. The beaches begin to call. Less than a month left now. My thesis had been accepted. I had no fear of the examination.

Mrs. Lanfiere opened the Nahant house, and Brother and Sister and I played in the sand. We lost ourselves in caverns in the rocks and were rescued, when the tide set in, by Little Mother and the maid carrying a basket of good things to eat.

"Deke," sang out Haddon one day, as he spied me across the Yard, "only fifteen days more and we're bound for the West!" And his face glowed with the joy of it. Deke had accepted a good position in a western college.

"Come on, Deke," I replied, "let's go to Mt. Auburn."

We took the river-road down by the salt marshes, past old willows planted by the soldiers of the Continental Army. We dropped down under a pine in the thick grass near the tomb of Booth. Deke and I had both suped for Booth. We had helped carry out Ophelia's body, and the tomb brought back happy nights behind the curtain with chattering French and Germans at Grand Opera, or other days with Booth and Barrett, or Fanny Davenport, who preferred college boys to regular supernumeraries.

We talked awhile about those happy days. Then our talk ran down. I could see that the old man had something on his mind.

"Look here, Deke," he said at last, "do you know that I'm going to be married on the first of September?"

"Well," I replied. "What of it? Do you want to postpone it?"

"Postpone it?" he fairly shouted. "Good Lord! Deke, postpone it! Why, man alive, I can't wait. I've telegraphed Mabel to see if we can't be married on the Fourth. . . ."

"Of July?"

"Yep! Wired her this morning. Say, Deking, will you be my best man, and will you lend me your old dress suit?"

"You know it, old fellow! Take my new suit—I'll wear the old one."

"And say, Deking Darlint, when are you and Helen going to marry?"

That question robbed the hour of its pleasure for me. We turned back toward town.

After all, why not? But Deke had a job. I had—ideas—but not even a plan. No plan? Well, I had something else—confidence. I hadn't wasted my three years. I wasn't always thinking of Alexandra. I had learned to work. I could accomplish more in an hour, when I left Cambridge, than in ten when I left Lanyon. I rarely put in less than ten hours at steady hard grind—some days, as many as sixteen.

All that told. While other men were whiling away the afternoon hours on the river or athletic field, or playing billiards or cards, or at the theatre at night, I had been busy with bones, a scalpel, the microtome and microscope. I had found time to read—not only science, but history, art, and philosophy. I re-read the "Æneid" and the "Odyssey." I found beauty in the "Bucolics" now; before it had been only a task. Tylor's "Primitive Culture" delighted and amazed me. Day by day I could feel my horizon broaden.

But as I look back over those Cambridge days it seems that after all the great incentive was Alexandra—her children, her home. I would have worked—and worked hard—even though I had never met her. But I *did* meet and come to love her and out of that grew a desire—the desire to measure up to her intellectual standard as nearly as I could.

Several times I met interesting people in Alexandra's drawing-room—new types of face and of mind to me. At first I shrank back into my shell of Westerndom. I was suspicious—mistrusted them. Like other young animals I was

afraid of the unknown. They did not measure up to my miserable little foot-rule. The fact that they did not try helped me over my difficulty. No talk was "made" in that *salon*.

Soon something within me asserted itself. I would not forever be a wall-flower. If only they wouldn't talk about so many things I knew nothing of. But later, after all the guests had left, my beloved would gently lead me in this direction or in that. The very air of her house was an inspiration to "try" and—to have confidence in myself. Nothing in it seemed meaningless. There was nothing that she had simply bought at a "store." A woman who radiates beauty and loves it for its own sake surrounds herself with the beautiful.

I realised, when it was almost too late, that there were such things as being on speaking acquaintances with all the gods of High Olympus and the immortal personages of Sophocles and Aristotle. I discovered that the Crusades were something more than outbursts of religious fervour. Confucius had not preached filial piety and brotherly love six hundred years before the Sermon on the Mount for nothing.

What a day it was when my Goddess guided me through the hitherto meaningless maze of the Art Museum! My attitude toward art had come from "Innocents Abroad." I knew as much about Titian and Velasquez as did Huckleberry Finn. Even French and German came to have an existence for me outside of textbooks: It was maddening to be the only dumb one of a little group which conversed, as it pleased, in English, French, German, or Italian. I could understand why people might want to study French and German, but that any cultivated person could care enough for Italian—that had been beyond me.

By this time I had reached the stage where nothing seemed impossible. One cannot come into contact with the mind of such a community without having one's curiosity aroused as to the limits of human thought. I had supposed that everything was settled. I knew that experiments were still being

made, but somehow I felt we had reached the final fixed stage of development. All this was part of my religious doctrine, not to be questioned, like my belief that Providence had reserved this continent for his only really beloved people—after America, the deluge. But one does not exist, even as a graduate student, at Cambridge, without substituting belief based upon experience for certain articles of implicit faith.

Life was complicated—but it was life. I was no longer ashamed of it. It was good. I did not know what I was going to do. But I was to do something—and do it well, because I would like it.

Shortly after the mid-years I had a long talk with Professor Harvey. He offered me a laboratory assistantship for the following year. That was something—a great deal—but the salary was too small. Father would need all his surplus for Bill, who had decided to go to Brown. My own money was all gone.

I had postponed making application for a position out West—there would be time enough when I got back to Lanyon. I was too wholly occupied with the day's work and too happy with Alexandra to plan for the future. It would take care of itself. Meanwhile I would work—I would be *ready* to seize the first favourable opportunity. It was as though I were being carried along, outside its banks, by the current of a mighty river. Where would it set me down next?

It was three days before I saw Deke again. I had thought about him but I'd been down at Nahant. When I got back to Cambridge I made for his room at once. I did not have to ask—his face told me.

"Ye Gods! Deke," he exclaimed, "I feel as though the whole cosmic universe had been lifted from my back. We are to be married on the Fourth!"

The last fateful day came. My rooms had been stripped, my books started west, my furniture sold. The parchment

for which I had toiled for three years was in sight! And yet that degree was to end—forever, it seemed it must be—the one overwhelming, still unconsummated passion of my life.

The Yard, as beautiful a picture as ever Botticelli painted; the brass band; the onlookers; and now our long line passing University Hall. Good-bye, old pump; good-bye, elms; good-bye, old Gore! On past Appleton Chapel, where I had learned to love the words of kindly wisdom. Across the street, like a long black milleped, every leg in a black gown. And up the steps of Memorial through that long noble hall, with its marble tablets in memory of Harvard men who died fighting for our country. And into Sanders' Theatre!

There were the usual speeches, the usual Latin orations, and all of it.

I couldn't make myself realise that I was part of it. I, Young Low, was to be a Doctor of Science! From Harvard University! I was breathless with excitement.

Then the lines began to form, and to file by our greatly respected President who gave us the crimson-bound white scroll. At last our turn came; we Doctors-to-be of Science and Philosophy.

It is *mine!* It is *real!* I *am* a Doctor of Science—from Harvard University!

Deke and I were to start west at three that afternoon. Our tickets were in our pockets. We parted at the door of Sanders', agreeing to meet at the station.

Just outside, on the steps, little Paul caught my eye and beckoned me. "Mother wants you to come to her carriage, Big Brother." Hand in hand Paul and I walked round back of Memorial.

"Get in," said Alexandra.

We started off toward Boston. Before we reached the bridge, Fate, chance, luck, call it what you like, had placed in my hands something that seemed to spell Opportunity. I accepted, of course.

CHAPTER XIV

THE LANFIERE NATURAL HISTORY EXPEDITION

WHAT wild goose chasers we mortals are. We seesaw up and down and pendulum back and forth through life—puppets pulled by strings in unseen hands. I always knew what I wanted to do. I thought I knew what I was destined for, that morning when Prexy handed me that diploma.

First, Alexandra Lanfiere was to pass out of my life! Oh, I had already discounted that. In my innermost heart I knew that this great woman could be only a memory of my Cambridge days—happiest of my life. I knew that I could no more attain her than measure up to Heaven. But all my life she was to be my supreme inspiration—and a friend whose spiritual presence I could always feel. And I would go on idolising her—yes, and loving her. No one could deny me that right—or take from me that privilege.

It was not easy to steel myself to accept this decree of what seemed inexorable fate. But . . . What else could I do?

I had said good-bye to Alexandra. That afternoon I was going home to get a position as Professor of Zoology in some good college, and then marry Helen. After I had saved some money and established a reputation as a teacher I would go back to Cambridge and settle down at my life work—Darwin Professor of Zoology, Harvard University! That was what I was going to do.

All that seemed inevitable, and I wanted to do it. And then that thing happened which started me off to the other side of the earth. I had little more to do with it than you had.

Mr. Lanfiere's father, at sixty-five, did not know how to spend the fortune that had been handed to him from ancestors who made rum in Medford, traded it for slaves in Africa, and swapped them for sugar in Jamaica to be converted into rum in Medford to be traded for slaves in Africa—and the old man didn't particularly approve of his brilliant son's career. Besides, the son had money enough. The old man belonged to the monument-founding age, to the time when to the appeal of individual existence, individual pain, and individual suffering, men scornfully asked, Am I my brother's keeper? We still seek remedy rather than cure. So Mr. Lanfiere, Sr., decided to finance a Lanfiere, Sr., Natural History Expedition to South America. The spoils were to be divided between the New England Academy of Science and the Smithsonian Institution. I could go along if I wanted to as Vertebrate Paleontologist.

I wanted to go. I was built that way. If a trip to some more remote region had been offered me I should have preferred that.

"Good," said Alexandra, "you have just six days in which to get ready. The *Petrel*"—Mr. Lanfiere's yacht—"leaves Boston on the third. Can you do it?"

"I can."

Twenty-eight hours later I was in Lanyon. As soon as I had answered the thousand and one questions that Father and Mother and Bill and Ann had to ask, I hunted up an old calico shirt, bluejean jumpers and a straw hat, and, *sans* shoes and socks, Bill and I trod the fields we loved so well.

The next morning saw me meandering along a shady country lane in a buggy, the lines about my feet and both my arms about Helen. She seemed to expect it. I expected it. It was natural. We couldn't talk. We made love, and ate olives, but by tacit agreement postponed naming the fateful day—and were engaged all over again.

Forty-eight hours later I was back in Boston. One night at least I must have at Nahant. And the Lanfiere carriage, next morning, took me back into Lynn.

How can I describe how I felt? I had given her up once—reconciled myself. It was harder than ever now. It seemed to me I should choke. My breath wouldn't come. I loved Helen. I intended to marry Helen. But that was still in the future and would take care of itself.

This was different. I loved Helen as I loved God and nature and Sister Ann and Mother. Alexandra Lanfiere was life itself. I had to give her up, just as one day I knew I had to die. But giving her up that way was like giving up life without having lived. It *had* to be that way. I agreed with her on that point. Yet as I look back now, I don't know why it had to be that way. Nor, just to be conventional, am I going to say that "it was for the best." But I agreed!

I was a bit glum for the first few days out. Not until we struck the turquoise blue of the Caribbean did life seem really good again. It took that long for my love of work and adventure to deaden my pain at having to let Alexandra slip out of my life. I had been reading all night and sleeping all day. My fellow scientists were much older than I, or, worse still, they were trilobites. "Infernal old fossils anyway. All they're good for is to grub for snails and dig for clams. Little better than the things they see under the cover-glass. Still, that old Washington geologist is not so bad. He seems a chirpy old fellow. He at least has lived and loved."

It's silly, the way one thrills at the sight of a flying fish, but I did, and that brought me out of my reverie. I was in the land of W. Clark Russell. I was Young Midshipman Easy. I felt I should like to re-read "Two Years Before the Mast." But I was still self-centred, self-contained, steeped in the gloom of the remembrance of all I had left behind. Probably Alexandra had gone out of my life forever.

So I hugged my memories of the immediate past. And

from that more distant past dragged forth, revived, and revised all my impressions of the sea, of emerald green islands, of sudden torrential rains, of the sun on edge like a burnished shield, slipping into an opal sea. And then the moon on a balmy night at sea! I would leave my lonely, hated bunk and make my way to the hurricane deck—swaying with the gentle swell of the sea, dreaming of things to come, of things done, of things to come.

Colon's palm trees and rich jungle interested me mightily. The tropics are really worth while, I decided. Then came the ride across the narrow Isthmus, past miles and tons of rotting, rusting French folly machinery; and quaint old Panama's shabby palaces and ginger-bread cathedral. Once more I could like things. They began to get hold of me. Alexandra was already of the past; Helen, still in the future.

The good old *Arequipa* carried us down that interminable West Coast which stretches from the Northern far into the Southern Hemisphere. But even yet I couldn't get up much enthusiasm over the Southern Cross; I got that later when climbing a cañon of the Andes one night all alone, I watched it revolve overhead in a great circle.

The old geologist and I at last found each other. He claimed to have discovered me first.

"But, damn you, you seemed to be in a shell," he said.

Many miles we walked the deck together, or whiled away the time at checkers, a pipe, or in arguments which began with nothing and led nowhere, but always left me curious and wondering.

You see, Garvin—that was the Old Man's name—was a philosopher. Took to it naturally. He was one of those self-made men. Had made two million dollars! Then lost it!

"While still a boy," said Garvin, "I could see straight across Kansas, away out beyond, and I could look right down through it."

That was all he ever did say about his boyhood. About

some things he was as voluble as a dictionary. About himself he was extremely reticent. He seemed to think of himself merely as a spectator on earth. He viewed phenomena in just that way. It didn't seem credible he could ever love, or be hungry, or get wet. Apparently he didn't mind such things. If he ever tired no one knew it. His strength was uncanny. He might have worked at Vulcan's forge or assisted Mars. When he shook his long black hair I expected to hear a lion roar. Yet he was gentle as a dove. Exceedingly slow to anger was Old Man Garvin, but when anger came, it was like a hurricane, uprooting everything in its path.

I owe much to the Old Man. I came to call him Dad. He fathered me. I felt that he could bend me as one bends a bow. One day I asked him if he couldn't.

"Yes, but I couldn't hit anything with you."

"Why not, Dad?"

"You haven't learned to focus your mind, Son. You are a good deal of a firecracker—something like the squids we used to make in Kansas on the Fourth. Why don't you learn to control your mind?"

I thought I had.

Farnsworth broke in with what he thought was a clever remark. I didn't get on very well with Farnsworth, our botanist. His mind was as methodical and as limited as a herbarium. He couldn't see flowers—only their Latin names had value for him. He was a classifier—exponent of the card-catalogue age. His conception of riches, I think, was to be able to buy out all the trappings of the Library Bureau and all the hardware of those people who make things in unit series. Facts existed for him only in the plant world, and there only to be plucked, pressed, dried, named in a dead language, and filed away. When he got enough of them he would look serious and say, "I must write a book." Which meant arranging his cards alphabetically and printing them.

"Why, his books don't even begin to have such interest as the books of old Bastian," said Garvin.

"How's that, Dad?"

"Never hear of Bastian, Son? You're forgiven. Not many people have. His fellow scientists hardly understood him. Even Germans frankly confess they cannot read him."

It seems that Bastian had a big desk and a pair of scissors. Suspended above the desk was a big open umbrella. He provided himself with two copies of each book he wanted to use. And he wasn't dealing with clamshells or toadstools. He pried the lid off mankind and looked right through to the bottom of the pot. He would clip a while—toss the clippings into the umbrella. He would get an idea and scribble—and chuck it into the umbrella. He was too stingy to buy paper. Used anything that came along—backs of envelopes, the fly-leaves of books, a frayed cuff. And he would scribble and scribble and chuck it all into the umbrella. When the umbrella was full, he sent the whole pile to a print-shop. "Wonderful books," said the Old Man, "if any one knew how to read them. But picking Bastian out of the mass is like finding in a mob a man who thinks."

"Doesn't everybody think?" I asked.

"Very few. You see," and he ran his fingers through his long hair in a meditative way he had, "thinking is like anything else. It is a gift. An art. A profession. As is fishing, lying, preaching, banking, or engineering."

"And is it that way about love?" asked Farnsworth, for Farnsworth and Graves had completed another lap round the deck and rejoined us. I think I have not introduced Graves. Graves was The Man with the Iron Jaw. An animate cadaver. His skeleton was his carapace. Dad said he had an antediluvian skull—which would make him all of forty-seven thousand years old. Graves wasn't as old as that. His hobby was invertebrate paleontology—stone shells and things you find in limestone. He knew a lot of minerals and could tell a diamond from a ruby without a compound lens or a Bunsen burner.

The Old Man didn't take kindly to Graves' interruption.

The shadow deepened a little in that heavy furrow between his eyes. But Garvin was kindly, and careful not to give pain.

He explained afterward that talking also was like making love, or banking, or fishing. "Of course every one talks, but few really converse. Graves talks, just as he walks—purely an affair of the muscles, as he uses his feet to get him to bed. He hasn't a mind, simply an organ of adjustment. That keeps him from walking off the ship, or eating his hat.

"We learn things that interest us. We are interested in that which we think we can use. Hence, Graves never learned to love. He lacks erogenic tissue. He married as a robin mates—with half the passion. He wouldn't have killed himself for love, or pined away and died. His passion is spent on the extraction of a grain of alumina. He never sees the gem itself, as Farnsworth never sees the flower. To Farnsworth the wild rose is noxious because it is out of place. They lack imagination. They think they experiment; in reality they repeat."

There is something soothing about the Pacific, and the Old Man was a good deal like it—giants both, calm, placid, serene; yet powerful and to be feared when roused to fury. The Atlantic generally is an old woman—a scolding abusive hag, rarely lovely.

Well down the coast, the third day out from Panama, we landed with tents and supplies at an island, just under the equator, thirty miles from the mainland. We were to stay a week and be picked up by the next boat. By night Graves had discovered there was nothing on the island and Farnsworth had sampled all its plants and flowers. They were ready to go on—though I must say Graves was rather decent about it.

"I can't make out," said the Old Man, "whether Graves has an emotional nature or . . . He must have. Everybody has. That is one of the things that animals haven't. It is one of the few things we get after birth that we want to

keep. When we cease to be emotional we cease to be human."

Wonderful days, with the Old Man on the Island. He taught me much, opened my eyes in many directions.

The island just missed being a mile long, and was rather narrow, rising up out of the sea a thousand feet. In the centre was a deepish ravine. At its mouth we pitched our tents. The west end of the island was highest, its slope a precipice.

There Dad and I went every night to watch the setting sun dance on the water and to listen to the boom of the heavy surf below. The sea looked so calm and unperturbed; there were no waves to speak of, no motion. Yet that surf rolled in against that granite wall mercilessly, unceasingly.

The bird life was overwhelming in its variety and number—pelicans, frigate birds, marline-spikes, cormorants, gannets. They seemed to get on with each other well—better than mortals do. Yet there was a kind of dog-eat-dog struggle going on constantly—the pelicans ate the fishes, and the fishes ate each other.

"Why not?" said the Old Man. "Why, do you know if something didn't happen to the eggs of every pair of fish down there and to the eggs of their progeny, in twenty years this sea about here," and he waved his brawny arms out over the water, "would be solid fish! You could ride over them in a chariot. And out of that struggle came man! He finds just as many excuses for eating other beasts and for killing his own kind. And he is the original and only cannibal."

It was the evening of the fourth day on the island. We had started back from our western aerie. I was walking ahead. Suddenly I felt my hair stand straight up and my whole body goose-flesh. Not ten yards in front of us, moving across the path slowly but showing awful strength, was a snake at least twenty feet long. "And we haven't a gun!" I exclaimed.

Not a word from the Old Man. He stopped me. Spell-bound we watched it out of sight, into the scanty underbrush.

"Give and take," said the Old Man. "But wasn't he splendid? Get it out of your head, Son, that Providence delegated to you the task of avenging the tragedy of Eden. Our ancestors crawled on their bellies. Our children may. Who knows?"

Overhead soared an eagle. We couldn't see his eyes, but we could make out, by the swift turning of the head, now here, now there, that he was seeking his evening meal. But no sign of effort; it seemed to move as does air.

"Here we have them," said the Old Man, "the two unsolved mysteries of the ancients—the two beasts which gave our forefathers the greatest amount of concern, stirred their imagination most, and inspired much of their literature. Man spent an even million years trying to understand the flight of the eagle and the secret of the serpent's fang. The Hebrews forgot to put the eagle in the Garden of Eden, but they made up for it by setting him in the sky to bring rain, and cause thunder and lightning. They deified him, and said, 'Why, He is just up there, and He is here; His is boundless power and eternal majesty.'"

On the morning of the next to the last day the Old Man and I set out for the pelican's breeding ground. Graves was sunning his dead plants. Farnsworth was studying a stone. We hadn't gone far when the Old Man stopped and began to scratch in the loose earth with his foot. Then we went back to camp and got two spades. At the end of an hour we laid bare a skeleton, several earthenware vessels, and other things that made our eyes big. Over the crushed breast of this relic of other days was a necklace of turquoise and emeralds; beneath this a broad plate of pure gold; around the head a row of golden images, each six inches long; and resting in the bony fingers of each hand a cup of pure gold. All were of exquisite workmanship and untarnished in this land of scant rainfall. The Old Man seemed to have an eye like an eagle—an eye that saw into the earth and beyond the clouds and down to the bottom of the sea.

"What made you suspicious?" I asked. I had seen nothing.

"I can't tell you. I don't know. Perhaps a glint of coloured earth—as if there might have been a fire there once."

Best of all was to get into a boat, after the other men had yawned themselves to bed, and row up to a corner of the island where the cliff sunk straight into the sea. There we would fish in fifty fathoms of water for dog-fish. The sea was still because protected there. The water was full of phosphorus. Far beneath the surface the line gleamed like a thread of gold as the hooked fish danced back and forth, fighting for life. When we hauled the line into the boat, it left a glistening trail across our trousers. The thrashing at the end of the line would become more furious as the fish felt himself brought closer and closer to this unknown thing that all instinctively fear. Then he would snap like the young shark that he is, until we would beat him to death with a club. It was great sport; and had a utilitarian purpose, for our meat was getting low, and dog-fish are good to eat.

Guayaquil was disappointing, but the ride up the river was wonderful. It was our good fortune to hit upon a perfect day, one of two that the Captain had experienced during seventeen years on the Coast. The whole range of the Andes was revealed to us in all its majesty. Chimborazo's icy head, more than a hundred miles away, glistened like a huge gem, under the equatorial sun. Every mile between coast and mountain summit was in sight, first low land; higher, great forests; and finally, barren slopes and icy peaks above the belt of vegetation.

The vision added to my impatience to get there and go to work. Somewhere in those lofty mountains lay my Opportunity.

With the next day came the first of the Peruvian coast towns and our first glimpse of the strange desert which stretches like a giant finger south along the Pacific slope of the Andes for seventeen hundred miles—sand, unbroken save

by an occasional rivulet fed by the melting snows of the Andes. How sharply defined was everything when seen from the deck of the steamer a few miles out at sea! The desert, billowy, dun, pitted, gaunt, spectre-like; and the green of narrow valleys.

Night usually found us anchored off some rambling town, built on the desert itself, because the arable land is too precious. Poor things, these towns—their streets mere lanes deep with desert dust, their houses low and flimsy because of earthquakes.

Many a night the Old Man and I climbed aloft and talked the night through, for sleep was impossible—the ship fell in with the spirit of the sea and rocked monotonously back and forth all night long.

One night we were off Salaverri. Inland were the ruins of a city, once great, among whose graven bones were earthenware, and gold and silver vessels, hundreds of years old. There, too, civilisation had once busied itself for love of gain and glory. In the afternoon native vendors had offered us of the spoils of graves.

"And ages hence," the Old Man said, "people will be poking around in *our* graves and kicking their feet through our skulls. They will wonder if we knew how to love and how to die—and probably they will think we didn't!"

"Were you ever in love, Dad?"

"Love, Son, is unstable—as a soap bubble. We don't know how to save it. When two people promise to obey, love, cherish, and protect, they make true love impossible. Love is not a promise. It shouldn't be founded on a promise."

"And your own . . ."

"It is not easy to talk about—but . . ."

"Mrs. Garvin was an æsthetic religious fanatic—delicate, high strung. She had everything to give but love—that she had given to God through Christ. I was a whole man. She was woman only in name. In another age she would have been Joan of Arc or Charlotte Corday or Saint Catherine.

But in Pittsburgh, and later in Washington, she was—President of the Ladies' Aid Society! She never got over the idea that physical love was immoral. Things sex were things carnal."

"Were you ever jealous?"

"Always. Jealousy is love's danger-signal. Sex is always jealous—of genius, of religion, of work. Sex is the oldest thing in life except hunger. And it's always jealous. I was jealous of her God. That, I think, drove me into materialistic speculation. It would have been easier had she worn the garb of a spouse of Christ, but she had none of the nun in her, save in her love. In dress . . . If she'd only worn mannish things I might have had my love-ache weaned. If she'd only evirated—just a little. But she knew how to make herself look completely feminine. Her clothes alone kept alive the lure long after I should have given her up—to accept her for what she was."

"Children?"

"No. Mrs. Garvin's hatred for things sex was so great she inhibited conception. You see, the trouble is," he continued, and his voice was low and sad, "some people become conscious of friction, others take it as part of the day's work. Too often a misunderstanding is forgotten in a burst of unnatural passion. There come other misunderstandings—at last unnatural passion fails. But most people . . . The husband does not fall, because there is no temptation. The inhibitions of childhood cover up his natural instinct, and he does not think of other women in terms of conquest. He accepts his lot, content that he lives immune."

"What about this eugenic business?"

"A murderer and a priest come daily from twin eggs. A pimp, a poltroon, and a priest are born from the same womb and fathered by the same man. Humpbacks and syphilitics have furnished their due quota of genius. I don't know what is best. I would if I were Providence. I am not. I can't

even interpret Mother Nature. I don't know what she is driving at."

"Does not the fact that a thing perishes suggest that it deserved death?"

"Yes; that is one point of view. By that we may write 'virtue' across the brow of those who crucified Christ and assassinated Lincoln and Garfield. The stronger prevailed."

"But those men," I interrupted, "were fanatics or mad."

"But, Son, who is to say who is mad and who a genius? The same war is a hellish thing and a holy crusade of righteousness—it all depends on the point of view."

The voyage "came to an end with mingled feelings of regret and pleasure"—as the Valedictorian of the Demosthenes Society used to say back in Lanyon. There is a kind of adaptability in my make-up which enables me to root quickly. I grow to places—but few soils nourish my roots of adaptability better than the teak deck of a ship—especially if that ship sail a tropical sea, and I can walk it barefoot and sleep on it in only a *sarong*.

Garvin helped. No doubt of that. He was like taking a course in Applied Biologies. With him as tutor for two years I felt I could qualify for the other barrel of the D.Sc. degree.

Garvin helped make that trip profitable. It would have been pleasant without him. With him . . . My life impulses took on new forms, new directions. My ambition was christened anew.

And to think that I had moped for three whole days because I had to leave Alexandra!

Bless her dear heart—she *had* been good to me though.

Yes, Garvin *was* a stimulant. He made me think. And when I thought, I wanted to get at it. I wanted to get to work again. Work is life. Of course.

To be alone again—as I was on the Great Plains! To be alone; to work—to think it all out. . . .

Lima was a relief. I wanted to get my feet on ground again. Callao was new and strange. It brought to mind things I had been only dimly conscious of. There in the bay lay a ship, dismantled and forlorn, hugging itself to itself as it crooned gently with the roll of the ocean which made its influence felt even behind the long protecting arm of cloud-bathed San Lorenzo. That old hull had seen life! A Nelson ship—in the battle of Trafalgar!

Lima—a quaint, lovable old town, once the home of the Viceroy of the greatest empire that the world then knew!

Yes, I was glad to get rid of my companions for a while. In a few days now we would separate. Our botanist was headed for the Amazon jungle. The shell-man would peck, peck, peck at rocks and make them give up fossil clams and snails. The Old Man was going on down the coast to the desert of Atacama.

And I? For one fleeting moment only I wished that I might wake up the next morning in little rock-ribbed Nahant, and play again with Little Mother, Paul and Pauline.

A street vendor's cry brought me back to the life that was. I looked out of my window. And gasped. Before me—beyond the low roofs of Lima—rose the Andes in all their splendour and majesty. Beyond that wall of eternal ice is my destiny. Up there beyond is my Opportunity!

CHAPTER XV

JESUS MARIA DE BURGOS

AS I sipped tea and nibbled cakes in my room at the *Sevilla y Cordoba*, I felt strangely elated. There seemed so much in the land of the Incas and Viceroy's that was worth looking into—so much in life worth fighting for.

And I feasted my eyes on the Andes.

A knock at my door.

"Com' in!"

I think I had never seen such a creature before, but there was that in his beady eyes, and the way his legs held his body, and his body his arms, and his arms his hands, that seemed in keeping with what proved to be his profession—a purveyor of female bodies, a pimp.

"Would Señor have the pleasure to purchase one nice little girl? One nice little *Chiquitita*? *Una Chiquitita muy hermosa? Una niña muy simpática?*"

"Get the hell of you out of here!"

I felt that the room needed fumigation. It was as though my naked body had come in contact with that boa-constrictor the Old Man and I saw back on the island.

Perhaps, after all, I shouldn't have sent the beast away. Such things are to be looked into, at least. There could be no harm in looking at his wares.

And then I would say: "Back off there, Satan, you and I have quit company."

Besides, I am engaged.

But . . . Well—yes, it might be an easy way to learn Spanish. Bismarck had recommended it. I've got to learn more

Spanish—or take a guide. I had never travelled with a guide. I disliked the idea. Thus far I had found my way through life well enough—why should I begin now to saddle myself with such an excrescence?

And then I caught my breath—tormented in mind and body for the very shame of the thing! Here I am, not a month from Alexandra and those sweet children, and engaged to a beautiful, clean, wholesome girl! And yet here I am, actually wondering how I can call that beast back to compound sin and crime with him! Degradation can go no further!

I will hunt up the Old Man. His philosophy is at least in the realm of reason. Can't I ever get over the idea that the world is divided into things that are to be devoured and those that aren't? Why can't I get rid of self and stand apart and view things?

The descending sun found the Old Man and me on top of Monte San Cristobal. At our feet, the Rimac, threading its way to the sea; behind us, that world-wall, the Andes, whence came the Rimac; nearer, green trees and cane fields; at our feet, once proud Lima; down there in the Bay, Nelson's relic crooning itself to sleep; out there, the sea where the pirate Drake had sunk ships and stolen much fine gold; overhead, impatient, funereal vultures: and here we were, the Old Man and I, also playing the game.

"What do you make of it, Son?"

"Dad, how wrong would it be for me to buy a girl?"

"What do you mean 'wrong'?"

"Well, would it be immoral, or wicked, or a beastly thing to do?"

"Look here, Son, haven't you learned that things are not so simple as they seem? Wrong means—wrong, eh? All right. Suppose you buy that girl. Whom do you wrong—yourself, the girl, her father and mother, your father and mother, the woman you lived with, the woman you're going to marry, Lima society or Boston society, civilisation, humanity, or God?"

Suppose you do wrong all—everybody, including Lanyon and Providence. Somebody will tell you that man learns by his failures.

"Probably the girl is on the market. Some people sell this, some that. You've sold something, haven't you? Sold your time and such poor brains as you have. What for? 'Increase science,' I suppose you'll tell me. Your family approve. Perhaps this girl has only herself to sell—just her body. Perhaps her father and mother are dead.

"You see, there are lots of contingencies. This country is very, very poor just now. In its war with Chile it lost the accumulated savings of three hundred years and one generation of accumulated manhood. It lost the desert of Tarapacá—a revenue of hundreds of millions. Not so long ago people down there in that town rode horses shod with gold. To-day you can buy English hall-marked silver for its weight in debased coin. I changed a twenty-dollar gold piece to-day—got a cartload of silver. Silver has lost out. That lowers the price of virtue in Lima. You see, Son, there is nothing simple in this world. Somebody in New York or London pulls a string—the human squeal is heard in the Andes and the Himalayas."

I wasn't getting on. I had a concrete problem. I wanted help. Meaning, of course, that I wanted Dad's approval of something I thought I might want to do, and knew I shouldn't. I prodded him again.

"Look here, Son, you're up to something. You want to do something you're afraid of. You come to me to get an excuse to quiet your conscience. Am I right?"

"You read me like a book. But yet it's hardly that."

"Well, then, what is it? What do you want—to hold hands, to look into eyes—are you hungry for companionship? Are these the things you want? Doesn't the question, after all, resolve itself into a bed big enough for two? Isn't that your real trouble? And you want to justify yourself before you take the plunge! Many a man strays afield, saying to himself,

'I'm only going to take the air,' or 'sniff the fragrance of the flowers,' who ends by indulging his sense of touch—the most fundamental and the oldest of the senses."

"And he always excuses himself," the Old Man went on. "Says he 'didn't intend to'—or that he is 'so susceptible he couldn't help it'! Now is that a real excuse? If we accept that, we kick the blocks from beneath the whole structure of individual moral responsibility."

"Shall we kick 'em?" I asked.

"I don't know. I really don't know. I know this: a man whose lust is promiscuous and persistent is less dangerous to the social body than the man who covets one woman without restraint. In short a man may 'steal' a woman just as he may 'steal' a purse. Of course there are gradations of theft—beginning with the boy who takes an apple that has dropped to the grass along a public road, for instance. He may climb the fence—or sneak into the cellar by day—or break in by night—or while pursued, maim or kill in self-defence; or steal from the orchard of a rich corporation, or from the one tree of a poor widow. Or, for boy, substitute starving man, or vagabond."

"I see."

"Yes, Son, things are relative. Absolutism may exist as an abstraction—but it has no place in codes."

"Or in ideals?"

"Not even in ideals—for it leads only to illusion."

"Who determines whether the boy will stop at the apple in the road, or climb the fence for more? The boy?"

"The boy, of course. But the boy's determination depends on many, many things, including the state of his stomach, the colour, size and sweetness of the apples, the proximity of a dog, the height and character of the fence, the results of similar previous ventures, and whether he has apples at home. All these and—everything that has happened to him during his whole previous existence would decide for him."

"Where does the boy come in, then?" I asked.

"Where does the boy come in? Why, he's just spokesman for what has gone into him. He's like an automaton—press one button, it nods its head; another button, it wiggles its ears. When the wife says, 'You don't love me any more,' her inherited sex experience talks—it senses danger.

"What people say, Son," Garvin continued, "is not, as a rule, the result of reflection but what their fundamental nature, plus social environment, tells them to say. Often judgments only express desires."

"But to get back to the boy, Dad; *did* he climb the fence?"

"Yes, and said: 'I di'n't mean to—I jis could'n' heppit.' And now comes the problem: Did that boy grow into an ordinary thief, a bank president, or a promoter? Or did he make a fortune in apples? Or did he . . ."

"Die of cholera morbus? What are you going to do with the boy, Dad?"

"The Catholics are right. Morals and conduct and character are habits. A boy's life is a series of high tides—each a little higher than the one before—each flooding him with new emotions, new temptations. See the boy through each tide and you will . . ."

"Rob him of initiative, weaken his will-power, and destroy his individuality," I suggested. I had heard that somewhere.

"Aw gotohell if you want to! Everybody here does it, anyway. In Lima male respectability is measured by the number of mistresses you keep."

The way the Old Man put it did not appeal to me—though it did sound interesting. I wondered how it would feel to be in a competitive mistress-keeping game.

I gave it up. "This thing will have to settle itself," I concluded. Thereby preparing myself for emergencies.

Why do things get so terribly mixed up? A kind of sullen desperation got hold of me that night. I couldn't sleep. I was afraid to trust myself outside my room. Even the Old Man had been unable to help me. Long after midnight I

sobbed myself to sleep and dreamed of the days when the dust of the Pike burnt my bare feet and we splashed in the shade of the sycamores that hung low over the Mud Hole.

I must have been homesick.

Busy days followed. Hours with bankers and at government offices. I was about ready to start out. I had decided to go overland to Titicaca, by way of Cuzco, and explore the country east and south of the Lake for fossil vertebrates.

I bought mules and argued for hours with stubborn, insolent *arrieros*. I bought Russian brick-tea; German condensed soup—looking for all the world like the bottom of a brush-heap; French cognac; Chicago tinned beef; pots and pans; and all the odds and ends I imagined I would need on a trip of two thousand miles through the mountains. It was a formidable array, even though I had held it down to the minimum. I hate baggage—wisely called *impedimenta*. I like to travel light. Just a toothbrush and plenty of gold. In Lima I had to load up with bulky silver.

Then a ship from the North came in, bringing mail—the first I had had since leaving home. Two letters for me—one, significant; the other, precious.

Alexandra wrote:

"No longer is there music in the singing surf of Nahant, nor shines the sun upon the sands of Lynn. Paul is disconsolate. Little Pauline talks constantly about her—Big Brother. "And what can I say for myself? To write 'I miss you' . . . Do you understand what those words mean—all the truth there is in them? Why not give up fossils? I think I could go. . . . I did not know I could miss you so! Two years. . . . It is eternity."

No letter from Helen. That was strange. I had expected one surely.

It was a long time before I could turn to Mother's letter. I reproached myself for not having opened it first. I know

I should have. There was much in Mother's letter, of course, but only this that was important:

"Your Aunt Mary had a letter from Helen this morning. Helen writes that she fears she will never see you again. Arthur Law and Jimmie Richardson have both proposed to her since you left. She says that she does not know what to do or what to think, everything seems so indefinite."

Dear, good, kind Mother. No comment. She knew these things were out of her hands. And she had confidence in me.

It is one thing to map out a journey, it is another thing to make up your mind to like it. Alexandra's letter upset me. I got suddenly stale. Somehow the whole interest in poor, extinct beasts seemed to fade away. That wasn't life. That wasn't even the pursuit of happiness. That kind of thing might do for Graves or Farnsworth. They could have their old bones and go to with them. I would go to . . . with Alexandra.

If I could only be certain that she meant what she said. I must wait. Women are ever changeable and fickle things. And then I hated Virgil for having penned such a dastardly line. There are at least two true women on this earth; and will be a third, for Pauline will surely be staunch and unchangeable as are her mother and mine.

The path of duty, however, seemed very clear. Besides—Nahant is thousands of miles away; Alexandra simply can't intend me to take her note literally. Besides—somebody has invested money in me. It's up to me to see that somebody gets returns. Besides—here is the opportunity of my life. Give it up? Give up. . . . It seemed absurd. I tore Alexandra's letter into shreds.

An act of bravado—of which I was instantly ashamed.

In the land of *mañana* nothing moves on schedule time. On a Wednesday I was ready, but something happened to my muleteer. Something happened daily, always unexpectedly,

always swear-word provoking. I finally capitulated. We would start on Monday!

From being the busiest man in Lima, I suddenly became an idler. I had three days to kill. With no details to worry about I was thrown back on myself and the tempter appeared again in the person of the pimp. He didn't seem quite so disgusting this time. I decided to investigate. He made certain proposals, had a list of certain female chattels and discussed the merits of each. Each had some special qualification, but there was one—*finisissima!*

"And her name?"

"*Se llaman, Señor, Jesus Maria de Burgos.*" The name was certainly against her, I thought, but the pimp was ready with a Spanish proverb to prove that there was special merit in the possessor of such a name. I don't recall it now, but he thought himself very clever. I finally consented to consider Jesus Maria de Burgos.

He came for me that night. I expected to be taken . . . I hardly knew where. I didn't expect much. There must be some trick, some gold-brick, about this proposition.

Within a block of the hotel he stopped in front of a stairway. We were expected. The mother let us in and took us upstairs to a drawing-room, the furnishings of which must have cost a great deal of money.

"Why doesn't she sell the furniture?" was my first thought. "She can't be the mother of the girl they're going to offer me." I put the question. The reply was not what I had expected, but I found it to be practically the truth. This mother couldn't have realised enough on that piano, in Lima, to pay for cartage three blocks. She couldn't have given away the big French mirrors. She had lost her husband and her son in the war. Nothing left but poverty and honour; a mother and a sixteen-year-old daughter. She couldn't turn her daughter adrift on the streets or put her in a brothel.

"Does Señor like Jesus Maria?"

There was something very attractive, very appealing about this little maiden. I admit it.

I wanted to; I didn't want to. With the usual result—we came to terms. The maid would be delivered that night, within an hour, at my hotel. And this, mind you, was the best hotel in Lima.

The cold-bloodedness of this transaction grated. I had curiosity; but little enthusiasm. I tidied up my room; filled my pipe; and waited. Tried to read.

The door was opened quietly and there stood Miss Jesus Maria de Burgos. Gosh! She isn't as big as Ann! And sister Ann is just twelve!

I don't know how she felt, but I hope she was not more embarrassed than I was. What little Spanish I had picked up in New Mexico and Lima deserted me. There she stood, her big, black eyes cast downward, her little round cheeks just peeping through her black *mantilla*.

For a fleeting moment I wished myself well out of it, but I thought the decent thing to do would be to be decent about it.

So I took little Jesus Maria by the shoulders, as a father would, and led her over to the sofa. We sat down. I smiled at her. She tried hard to look pleasant. She did not entirely succeed. Gently and with trembling hands I found and unfastened the pin that held her *mantilla*. She was a clean sweet little thing. So innocent! There was a fragrance in her hair—as black as her *mantilla* and her eyes—which framed a guileless little face. I tried to kiss her. I didn't manage very well. She did not seem to know much about such things.

The rest of her little body was also done up in black, but whether it was held together by needles and pins, or by hooks and eyes, I couldn't quite discover. There was no hurry. Besides, I felt guilty—like a burglar. Whatever she felt, she didn't tremble. No—it must have been resignation. I was nervous.

I finally decided to let her take care of herself. I went over to the other end of the room. Took off my coat, brushed it

carefully, and hung it up. Next, my vest received the same careful attention. I was a long time getting off my collar and necktie. In my nervous deliberation I tore my shirt and dropped my collar-button. It rolled back under the bureau and I had to get on my hands and knees to find it. Getting on my feet again, I removed my shirt. Just as I got it over my head, I heard a sound—half gasp, half smothered exclamation. I turned around. There stood little Jesus Maria de Burgos—as she was born, only sixteen years older, much more beautiful, and quite as innocent.

Now just what would have happened had the sequence of events been different up to this point, I am not prepared to say. But . . . It wasn't that anything came between us. It wasn't Helen; it wasn't Alexandra. It was her complete and trusting innocence, I think. "By God!" I said to myself, "I won't harm a hair of this child's head."

And I held her in my lap and looked at her for a long time. She was so beautiful.

But I had sworn I wouldn't. Then I made her understand as clearly as my Spanish would let me that if she would kindly get those blamed black things draped around her again, I would take her back to her mother.

Her face was a study when she comprehended—but I could not read it.

I helped her dress. And took her home to her mother.

CHAPTER XVI

ALONE IN THE ANDES—WITH FANNY

NINETEEN months in the mountains, high up among the everlasting snows!

I started out of Lima astride a big, rawboned mule that was guaranteed sure on his feet and proof against *sirroche*. He was neither. We parted company at the end of the tenth day. I had reached Huancavelica, a miserable town high up on a spur of the Andes. In the afternoon I had ridden alone across the desert, some dozen miles, to look at an old Inca ruin. It was a steep climb. On top I hobbled the beast and wandered round among the crumbling walls.

Before starting back I thought I had better tighten the girth. I stooped—and that mule took advantage of me, wheeled suddenly and sent me sprawling among the rocks. Fortunately, an old Colt pistol in my hip pocket got the brunt of the blow. It broke the handle and drove a piece of ivory into my thigh, but otherwise left the six-shooter and me ready for action.

I had been good to that mule. Now I was a raving maniac, a wild savage. I chased him for an hour and for still another hour tried strategy, hoping to get close enough to kill him. I did. I had to carry my heavy Spanish saddle, blankets, and knapsack, for four hours through deep sand.

There is no good mule but a dead mule.

After that sad and costly experience I had to find another beast. Horses were not to be had—no good for the mountains anyway, they told me. After a three days' search I bought little Francesca. Her size appealed to me. If she couldn't carry me over the mountains, I could help her. For two thou-

sand miles that mule—renamed Fanny—and I kept company. I learned to trust her sure little feet in places where I dared not trust my own. She had common-sense.

One day we struck a terrible trail, one of those heart-breaking affairs where you go up three feet, slide back four through loose rubble, and begin all over again. In places it was so steep I was ashamed to keep my seat. But Fanny would look round, as much as to say, "Stay on, Old Feller, I can make this all right." Near the top we came to a three-foot high break in the trail. It was awful. It seemed nothing less than a derrick would do. There was no other trail; we *had* to make it. Fanny and I looked the situation over and then looked at each other. I got off, took the saddle and saddlebags off, and said to Fanny, "There's just one way you can manage this, my dear—by combined effort." She understood every word I said. "Now, old girl, get your front feet on that ledge." First she tried herself out cautiously. Then she put her front feet up. Then I got behind her, shoulder against her rump. "Now. One, two, three!" And up she went.

Positively appalling, those Andean roads at first. I can almost feel the cold, clammy sweat on my brow now when I think of them.

Imagine yourself on a five foot wide trail, wet in places, hence slippery, chiselled out of the almost perpendicular face of a gorge, six thousand feet deep! But that isn't all. This trail curves! You can't see thirty feet in front of you or twenty feet behind. But that isn't all. In places the rock wall—in a country where the earth quakes oftener than it rains—hangs far out over your head. In places it looks as though a bat's wing or an echo might let loose a million tons of rock. And all the time you realise that one misstep sends your soul a mile below to add its anguish to the cry of a troubled stream ever dashing itself to pieces in its boulder-strewn bed.

Before I really knew Fanny, I would dismount and creep along these terrifying trails. But I soon gave that up. I could see that Fanny didn't approve. I grew callous to black abysses.

I would even ride Fanny sideways, dangling my feet over death, whistling a merry tune.

For most of the journey I was alone. An *arriero* never is company. He is either days behind, or miles in front. It is his business to get lost. And so I came to rely on my own blankets, my own hard-tack, and my own spirit lamp.

One's soul doesn't expand in the mountains. Mine doesn't. There is joy in the mountains, but it isn't broad—just up and down. It gets into you. I never feel alone on the plains, or on the desert. But away up there above the clouds lonesomeness cuts like a knife. Or would, but I wouldn't let it. I could always whistle. Sometimes I could sing.

Nature is cold up there. Hardly a moment was I out of sight of eternal ice. But there have been days when the sun side of my face was blistered, the other side shrunk with the cold. Fact.

One day, crossing a seventeen-thousand-foot high pass, within ten minutes I encountered a rain storm, a hail storm, and a blinding snow. Ten minutes later the sky above was virgin clear; in the cañons far below black clouds flashed lightning and thundered like heavy artillery.

One of my trips took me far back on the Amazon slope. For thirty days Fanny and I dragged on, always to the east. But never did we strike one single mile of level trail. One day it was all up, up, up; the next day, down, down, down. At eleven o'clock one morning Fanny nibbled *ichu* grass at the foot of a glacier, while I made tea; at three that afternoon she browsed on the tender shoots of bamboo, while I made tea in their shade and admired the opalescent hues of humming birds.

I am not attempting to describe my journey. This is not a guidebook of travel in the Andes, nor an account of my scientific expedition. But on this great highway some things hit

me so hard they marked me for all time. They have become part of me.

We reached one of the most formidable of the Peruvian passes, not the highest, but high enough. Sixty long miles between village and village over the great *cumbre*. The trail became more and more faint, at best nothing but the tracks of llama pack-trains. Where the mountains narrowed down to a defile, the rock had been worn into deep narrow gutters by countless Incas through countless hundreds of years. Fanny really suffered here, but I could do nothing for her except lead her and talk to her. Near here I first saw wild vicuña—perhaps a thousand in a single herd.

Shortly after noon a snow storm overtook us. The pass widened, the faint trail grew fainter; and disappeared. We floundered on—till I knew that the day's work was done, for we were lost. And there Fanny and I stuck till late the following morning, when we dug ourselves out of the snow and went on as cheerfully as we could till a sullen wandering Indian was bribed into putting us on the trail.

Of course he was sullen; he had four hundred years' reason to be. Human nature is human nature. To have one's ancestors shot through greed and one's mothers and sisters outraged through lust, to be jeered at and lied to and stolen from and spat upon through four centuries—yes, the Inca is a sullen brute; but gods even were more than gods not to be sullen.

Within two days' ride of Cuzco, I fell in with a scion of the conquering race. Ugh! What a dog he was! Boasted of viceregal blood! He sought the provincial capital for a week's debauch.

We rode along side by side. I could think of no way to get rid of him. Toward evening we saw an Indian girl trudging along ahead of us, the little pack on her back swung from a band around her head. As soon as she saw us she left the road—to avoid us. That only whetted the bestiality of the Peruvian. He turned his mule out of the path and toward

her, calling out, "Lie down." The girl quickened her pace, going farther away from the trail. Again he shouted at her, and prepared to dismount. But she fled down a rocky slope with the fleetness of a deer. I could have killed him as cheerfully as I had killed the mule. But I didn't get out my gun. I felt that I should, but I didn't. My chivalry was swallowed up by the prospect of being accessory to rape. I was ashamed of myself.

Yet these same Indians when they come to know one, when they have lost the sense of fear, are affable human beings like ourselves. They have a quick wit and a keen sense of humour. On a Sunday morning, as I journeyed south beyond Cuzco, I passed a long line of men, women, and children, dog-trotting their way to Mass. "*Como se vende wauwitas, mamacita?*" I shouted to a rather pretty woman, a baby *wauwau*—on her back.

"*Dos por media, Señor!*" she sang out, quick as a flash.

The same question in the same spirit might have elicited from a young mother on the Congo or the Amur, the same cheery reply—that the price of babies is "two for a nickel." We are all of the same metal, only the patina is different—it depends on our exposure.

To cross Lake Titicaca by *balsa* is worth the journey to the Antipodes. But once is enough. Countless roseate flamingoes gave colour to the sombre marshes. The strange songs of the villagers only emphasise the solitude. The vast snow fields of the second loftiest chain of mountains in the world tower above the lofty lake they nourish.

Throughout this range, nearly two thousand miles long, are the ruins of an ancient civilisation enshrining the images of the heroes of old. Time has dealt unkindly with most of them. Only a few, because of their mass, have been too much for the prying pickaxes of the conqueror. Sacsahuāman, that mighty fortress behind Cuzco, must forever rank as one of the mightiest feats of engineering in the world. Ollantaytambo and

Tiahuanuaco are the New World exponents of Karnak and Baalbec. Tarentum purple was not more purple nor crimson cloth on the Field of the Cloth of Gold more crimson than the purple and the crimson cloth the graves of these ruins yield. One wonders what might have happened had the rulers of this kingdom—wider than that ruled by Charlemagne—been allowed to develop their civilisation in their own way. But nature wouldn't have it. They, too, have become extinct.

Hunger and thirst and intense cold, stinging heat, long nights, sleepless because fearful, far away views of sublime grandeur, odd bits and fragments of human companionship, and above all the joy at the accumulations of personal conquest, for my quest for fossils was succeeding—these made the ups and downs of my life among the Andes.

One night in particular, seared in my memory, stands out from that long panorama of ever-changing forms. Fanny and I, as was sometimes our custom, attempted the impossible—and we were benighted, we had failed to reach our day's destination. The glimmer of a faint light through the cold rain, long after dark, enticed us from the road. There we might find shelter. Across a pitted marsh strewn with boulders we cautiously picked our way to a low stone hovel, shut in by a stone corral, made, I discovered in the morning, from fragments of marvellous masonry brought from an ancient ruin.

A knock at the door—no response. I forced it open and found myself in a low single room, thick with smoke and foul air. There was no sign of furniture and the earth floor was damp and musty. In one corner a woman in tattered skirts crouched over a fire of damp peat and wet *ichu* grass, trying to get a pot to boil. In another corner a man in ragged *poncho* was trying to quiet a mindless child of six. A gaunt pig occupied the third corner. That left the fourth for me.

It was that, or the morass, or an invisible and dangerous trail. Not a word of Spanish could these squalid descendants of the Incas understand. They seemed half-witted and

in mortal terror of me. From centuries of experience they knew too well what they might expect.

I loosened Fanny in the corral and brought in the bridle, blankets, and saddle-bags. I had had no food since morning, except a few cocoa leaves. Silently and furtively observed, I warmed my scant meal over my alcohol lamp; then spread my blankets, and stretched out, dead tired and still booted and spurred. The man and woman talked on, in their strange *Quichua* tongue. The monotonous murmur of their voices soon brought sleep.

I wakened with a start in the middle of the night. Rain-drops were steadily pelting me in the face—the thatch roof was leaking. The merciless wind howled outside. But above it I heard wolves crying; and within, the mindless child moaned, and the pig snored restlessly. I lighted my candle. I was alone with pig and child. The parents had fled. Nor did they show up in the morning. I left silver in payment for their involuntary hospitality.

When I reached Puno, where I was to take a train to the coast, I had to part with Fanny. I was glad that I did not have to sell her to a Spaniard. A big raw-boned, kind-hearted Swede was glad to take her at her full value.

And so I left the Andes. There had been hardship—plenty of it. But I was at the age which measures the joy of travel by its discomforts and adventure by its hardships.

I had had enough of solitude, bad food, broken sleep, cold nights, hot days—for a while. I wanted to see somebody again.

A few days at Arequipa helped break the suddenness of my return to the world I had left so long ago. Big-hearted Americans had charge of the railroad there, and a warm-hearted family of friends from Cambridge were in charge of the observatory.

Distressing news too—Graves was lost somewhere on the Ucayali; Garvin—my Old Man Garvin—had just gone north

on a U. S. Cruiser, very, very sick. Farnsworth, our botanist, had died of beriberi, on the middle Marañon.

At Mollendo I was astonished how big a pile my accumulation of boxes made—more than one hundred tons in all, including some twenty tons of antiquities and human remains. If Mr. Lanfiere wanted specimens, here they were. Hard work and persistence had told. My expedition had been more successful than I could possibly have anticipated.

Blood, muscle, energy, untiring zeal, had gone into those boxes. I had more than come up to Mother's expectations, I had justified Alexandra's confidence, and I had made ample returns for Mr. Lanfiere's generous impulse. I had proved that my confidence in my ability was well founded.

The four days at sea from Mollendo to Lima counted as nothing in the year's work, but they dragged interminably. I had had no mail for eight months. When I got it at last in Lima, it took me hours to go through it.

Nothing had happened. Everything had happened. The Lanfieres, *my* Lanfieres, were abroad. They might stay indefinitely.

And Helen? Well, Helen had given me up.

I kept saying to myself, "Helen is married. Helen is married." I didn't know just quite what the news meant to me. I was ashamed to confess, even to myself, that it didn't mean all I had imagined it would. I really and truly thought I loved Helen. I ought to have been heart-broken. But I wasn't—not at all.

I was too busy trying to decide why Alexandra had gone away. What did *that* mean? Of course, I told myself, I am interested in that question only for her sake—but I knew better.

At last the whole pile was disposed of, the last letter read. I had had supper sent to my room. I was inexpressibly lonely. I felt quite out of the world—forlorn and abandoned. The prodigal son had returned—but no feast, no welcome—no

Helen—Alexandra gone to Europe. Europe! Europe seemed very, very far away.

I arranged the pile of letters now in chronological order. In one pile were Helen's—I re-read every one of them. They followed along at regular intervals. In the last one, only four months' old, she had said:

"Five months and no letter from you. For a year James wanted me to give him an answer. I am twenty-three. I feel I ought to be married. Mother wants me to wait; but Father says you have forgotten me. I can not go on this way forever. James and I are to be married next month. I have sent your ring and your letters to your Mother."

Well, that ended that. Only Marie had come between Helen and me. I had loved her as I had loved Helen. Only Marie? How about Alexandra? Had I been honest?

But when I could get away from trying to think as I felt I ought to think . . . why, I was surprised and somewhat shocked to find that I felt relieved. It seemed as if the bit had been taken from my mouth and the saddle from my back. The world was before me.

The spirit of youth called. Don't misunderstand me. Some of us seem born that way. We can not help it if we never felt young nor grow old. We wouldn't if we could. We are always complete, day by day. Our vision follows our nose, ahead. We do not sigh as we think of mistakes made and of opportunities overlooked—nor regret them. We only ask for other opportunities.

CHAPTER XVII

MY SOUL AND I

I THINK I prefer the delirium of fever to that of wine. It doesn't upset me so. The after effect is not so lasting. And I see my bare soul in more rosy colours. In wine I am apt to be earthy, perhaps a bit sordid. Exaggerated common-places struggle with exuberance. In fever I am freed of banalities. I see my soul in its true dimensions, as it would like me to see it and as I would like to have it. I don't know whether fever affects you so. Some people dread it. To me it more than compensates for having to stay in bed. A little terrifying at times, this delirium—I see too far into myself.

It took me the day after we sailed from Callao. I didn't mind it a bit. I had already got to fretting and stewing. I had the ship to myself. I was glad of that. I wanted to be alone. I believe I have wanted that particular thing too often; but I can't help it. It is good society that would cause me to part company with myself. Haven't you known people who dread to be alone a minute, who fret and fuss when forced back on their own haunches, if only for an hour? I have never felt that way. Even as a boy I could enjoy being alone. A particularly discerning aunt used to call me "Young-Man-Well-Pleased-With-Himself." I didn't mind. I suppose she thought me selfish.

Probably I am. Desire to participate in a social organisation is, no doubt, inherent in all of us. At any rate everywhere we find men combining in social units. But, after all, there are as many units in each social unit as there are individuals. When it comes down to the last analysis, when we stand face to face with death, each man has to take care of himself.

It must have been something I ate. I think the tinned salmon may have been a little off colour. It had a suspicious look, but in those days I thought I could eat anything. How many times I have boasted of having the digestion of an ostrich! And as for eyesight—well, I know now that I abused my eyes. I read on trains and read on horseback, and wrote down the words of Indian songs by the light of the moon.

I think we don't learn early enough in life the true value of things. Even words, it seems to me, should have value. One ought not to squander them. Talk for talk's sake never meant anything to me. That is probably why I became a good listener, although I must have learned something of it from my Indian friends. Indians never talk. They know how futile argument is. The story-teller is listened to, respectfully and silently, because he is expert testimony. Conversation should be an exchange of ideas, words being the medium of exchange—but having no value in themselves.

"Shall I send in the ship's doctor?" The little English steward seemed genuinely alarmed. I wasn't a bit frightened. When my end comes, I should like it that way. The ship's doctor was a Chileno, of Spanish descent, probably educated in Paris. He couldn't understand me. I would fight it out myself.

At home old Dr. Hancock would have been sent for. He would have felt my pulse and looked at my tongue, meanwhile peering thoughtfully into the face of a watch as big as his hand. Then he would ask for two tumblers of water. Finally he would turn to Mother and say, "I think it is nothing very serious. Of course, there is no knowing what this might develop into, but I find," here he would open my shirt and peer into my chest, "no indication of a rash, though I have given him something to bring it out, and"—just now he would be forcing down my tongue with the handle of a spoon—"I find no spots here yet. Alternate these powders every three hours through the night. As long as he remains quiet give him a spoonful from this glass, but should his fever increase during

the night, give him a spoonful from this every fifteen minutes. I will call again to-morrow morning."

Of course he would call. Good old fellow, that was his business. He had one carriage and two horses to maintain, one wife and five children to support. He couldn't very well do it without prolonging a calomel-castor-oil case into possible scarlet fever or pneumonia.

Had I been certain that the Spanish doctor would ask for two glasses of water and two spoons, I think I should have let him in. Five days yet before we would get to Panama; I would enjoy the contest.

One thing worried me about that long delirium—and I had had that feeling many times before—I couldn't dream of going to Heaven. But I could think about it.

Would Marie be there? I should like to talk things over with her again. I should like to know what she did with her little flat and how the world in general had used her since I had passed out of her life. Would Garvin be there? Hardly. No room in Heaven for Atheists. He certainly couldn't be there. Yet I liked Dad. I should miss him terribly. . . . Then I tried to list the Commandments I had broken. Somehow I couldn't call them off in order. I seemed afraid to name those I had not broken. I could only find . . . Well, at least I hadn't committed murder. Though I had shot a mule. Would I have murdered a man if he had kicked me as that mule had? I wasn't sure. Then I went back over my life—and found I had been constantly doing things I had thought I wouldn't do. Couldn't I be good?

Why had I been so good for so long? That puzzled me. I hadn't really meant to be so goody good. I fell to cataloguing my virtues. They made quite an array. Little Jesus Maria de Burgos—I had bought a female, a graceful Greek vase. I hadn't broken it. I had sent it home sound, as I had found it.

Great Scott! Why were Greek vases created, if not to be used? Of one thing I was sure—I wouldn't boast of the ad-

venture. In the first place, I wouldn't be proud of it. A better reason was that nobody would believe me. Mother might, of course. Alexandra would, and she would say . . . What would she say? Would she really mean that? I pondered over this a good deal. Somehow I couldn't even be certain that Mother would wholly approve. She would say she did, of course. She would say, "Why, Young, how fine of you! That is just the kind of boy I knew you would be." But would she say that because she thought it wise to do so, or because she really meant it?

At supper at Alexandra's, one night, I could not help overhearing the conversation of a noted New York writer, a woman, and a distinguished English actor. They were interested in each other—I could see that. I was shocked because he was telling her something of his love affairs. Of course, I couldn't tell what she was thinking, but she looked as if it were: "Um—m! This man must be worth knowing!" She didn't seem a bit horrified at his frankness. After all, is chastity the only reward of virtue? Is it like keeping one's pie . . . to mould on the pantry shelf?

I got to thinking of Marie. I could see the pleasing curves of her body. Marie had queer ideas about some things. It just struck me, in my delirium, that she'd never let me see her half undressed. One thing or the other. "My dear," she said to me one night, "the most abject creature in the world is a half-dressed woman." I agree—so potent is the habit of expectancy. We are queer bugs.

What did little Jesus Maria think about these things? Would I do the same thing over again? What did Jesus Maria think about me? Could it be possible she'd say to herself, "The next time I am bought, I hope a real man gets me"?

I kept getting in deeper and deeper.

I mentally listed the good people I knew, checked them off—the really good people that had never committed sin or crime. Should I like to be shut up in Heaven with them? There I checked myself. "Why, you blasphemous beast, to think of

being 'shut up' in Heaven! Well, Huxley wasn't afraid to think." And I kept meeting more and more people who were like him. Why are people afraid to talk about such things?

Some very wicked people seem to get along amazingly well. Mr. Lanfiere, for instance. Not the old man, the patron of science, but that husband of Alexandra's. He could ride roughshod over women, snap a whip at politicians and make them dance, control legislatures, hobnob with actresses, gamble, and get as drunk as a sailor on first shore leave.

Could I be happy in Lanfiere's shoes? Well, it must be wonderful to be so powerful. Why have so many people to be born poor? No, I didn't mean that. Why had I to be born poor? Why hadn't Father been a land grabber, or stolen a railroad or a bank? Why had he to be just a splendid, lovable, honourable farmer? Why hadn't I a rich uncle who would turn his fortune over to me?

I would use it in New York. How would it feel to be able to walk into a Wall Street bank and say, "Give me a million dollars"?

"How will you have it?"

"Oh, hundred thousand dollar bills. Those other millions"—I had decided on a number; I would have a million for each year of my life—I would say, "now get busy with that other twenty-two million. I should like about twenty per cent a year on that."

Then I would call a cab and drive straight to the waterfront, find an old tobacco-rum-soaked Captain from Salem, and I would say, patronisingly, "Want a job, my Fine Fellow?" He would click his heels, stand at slue-foot attention while he hitched up his trousers, touch his hat respectfully, shift his quid, and say, "Aye, aye, my Fine Young Fellow, what can I do for you?"

I would say, "All right, My Hearty," and I would carelessly show him that roll of bills. No, I would have to get one of those hundred thousand dollar bills changed. Ten bills wouldn't make a very big roll. I would get nine one hun-

dred thousand dollar bills and, well, I'd take the rest in hundreds. I'd want a roll of bills big enough to choke a horse. That was our idea of real money those days.

"Do you see that?" I would say. And I would skin off a hundred dollar bill. "You are engaged. Buy me the best yacht in this town and fix 'er up. Hang the expense."

And Alexandra, and Paul and little Pauline and I, we would sail the seas forever, only landing once a year to buy canvas and white paint.

There is some stone left in that hay-field, there's mullein in the pasture and thistle in the meadows, and the fences have all gone to the devil. The orchards need pruning and the barnyard is full of dog-fennel.

Mother, why did you ever let me leave Lanyon? I want to be good. I want to go to Heaven with you and Father. I want to be a useful, patriotic citizen. I want to love my village.

Well, Helen is married. What's that farmer doing for her? Is he kind to her? Is he good to her? Or does he make her milk the cows and build the fire and cook his breakfast? Would Helen make a good squaw?

Would I want a squaw? I would not. You can hire squaws. They can even be bought, and not so very far from the old slave market of New York, too. The title isn't very good. But you can buy them.

But I couldn't. I had saved up only enough money to buy a folding bed. Some people have to be poor. If we all had the same there wouldn't be any wealth in the world. But, damn it all, I need money, and I am going to get it. Hadn't I read in old Horace, "Get money, young man, honestly if you can; if you can't—well, get money"? But suppose everybody looked at life that way. What a gang of cut-throats we would be! The prospect was not at all pleasing.

Was I really fair to Helen? Did I really intend to marry that girl? I certainly did. Well, she was married. That set-

tled that. Helen would have made a fine wife, though. Would she? Well, she would if I had stayed in Lanyon. She would have been such a good mother to the children! Would they have had to lie to her, or would she have understood them? Would she have known that it is better to let a boy butt his brains out on the rock bottom of the Mud Hole than to learn to lie to his mother? Well, I think I could have brought her to that point of view.

Curious thing this mother love—the one pure and unselfish love in this world. That's what I thought. But then, Señora de Burgos sold little Jesus Maria!

The delirium ended. Then my mind, as my body began to feel its accustomed tingle, turned toward the future. Impatience began to consume me. Would we get to Panama in time to catch the *Rockland*? It would be touch and go. Our steamer was half a day late, because of fogs. I would have to hustle to get the *Rockland* at Colon. If I didn't make it, I'd have to wait ten days! The very idea was unsufferable. It would be good to get back on an American ship. I hoped she was fast. I was impatient.

I got the scientific fever. I wanted to unpack my trophies and parade my scalps. I had real things in those boxes. I'd make the paleontological world sit up and take notice. I'd show these archæologists that they didn't know all about the Inca empire. But I would be modest. Of course. When I was telling about finding that old series of missing links between reptiles and birds, I would say: "Oh, it required no knowledge. I was simply fortunate. The credit is all due to that noble patron of science, Mr. Lanfiere. I merely happened to be the humble instrument in the hands of a Providence which constantly unfolds its wonders to childlike minds in contradiction of what it says in the book of 'Genesis.'"

Yes, I would be very modest. I would probably be invited to Washington, to take charge of the Smithsonian Institution. Why, I might be made Doctor of Civil Laws at Oxford and

honourary member of the Berliner Akademische für Naturwissen-schaft. Perhaps I would receive the prize of six thousand *kronen* from the Vienna Academy of Science. I might be presented at the Court of St. James. Of course I hardly expected much from my own country. Brains are not properly prized at home! Why, Berlin would have made me an Alderman.

What was Alexandra up to?

Very curious—I had a presentiment I wouldn't get a letter from Alexandra in Panama, not one line, not one solitary word. What would that mean—that she had made up with Lanfiere? Was some . . . I grew fidgety. I wanted to get hold of something and choke the life out of it. I would do something desperate. I would find Alexandra! I would find her!

"Why, you're crazier now than when you had the fever," I said to myself. "Alexandra is gone. Forget her."

"One thing is certain," I thought, "I'll make Helen Stratton regret her impatience. I'll prove to her that I was worth waiting for."

Business? Would I care to go into business? Certainly not the business of making money. That was a slave's job. Toil? Yes. Merely for money? Certainly not. But I could. It required only the mastery of a certain technique, certain and continued favourable opportunities, eternal stick-to-itiveness, and a knowledge of psychology—make the other fellow want it hard enough to buy it at your price.

But was that a game worth one's whole life? Some found it so—and no doubt got immense satisfaction out of the power they wielded. But no merely rich man had ever necessarily enriched mankind. Of course there are many ways of . . .

I tired of the problem. But I knew that I could make money. I had business instincts—I was sure of that. I had not failed yet in any undertaking. But after all, business . . . Why, business is the last resort of a narrow but energetic mind. There are a hundred things I might better choose than that. That is not to be my life—except as a last resort.

CHAPTER XVIII

LIFE AND DEATH

GREAT God!" It was half sigh, half joy. And I would have known the voice anywhere in the world.

I had been mooning in the shade, while palm trees and bamboo groves receded from view. I had reached and left the Isthmus the same day. I had caught the *Rockland*.

"Merciful Heavens, Dad! What have they done to you? I didn't know you were on this boat. What *have* they done to you?"

Garvin—my Old Man—sank into a chair.

It didn't seem possible. He didn't have to tell me he had lost eighty pounds. It was seared across his face—now gaunt and haggard, as though he had just come from the tortures of the Spanish Inquisition. Never shall I forget the awful suffering his great heart tried to hide—for back of his despair was superb resignation. I couldn't keep the tears from my eyes.

He didn't have to tell me that he was going home to die. Beneath the lines of suffering was written: "Good-bye, world that I have loved. Good-bye, everything. Good-bye, everybody." It was not mere death I saw—it was the supreme tragedy of this little world of ours.

"Yep, it is just ordinary every-day cancer. Of the stomach, liver, spleen, of my whole blooming guts. It grows faster than they can cut it out!"

I had never heard the Old Man talk Kansas before. Strange how his acquired vocabulary fell away in the presence of death.

Why couldn't it have been I? This man could do big things

—think great things. His laboratory was the universe. Into it he dived. Out of it he brought laws. I grubbed in the earth, to find . . . just grubs. Here was America's sage, still young, a career before him, and now . . .

"I am hardly a fit burrow for worms. I would contaminate the soil."

Couldn't death show any sense? No discernment at all?

But O! it was good to see him again. If Dad must die, he must. God has been good to give me this journey home with him!

And I cared for him better than any nurse in the world could; even better than his wife, for I loved him.

"Yep, jus' goin' home to be planted. Wife wouldn't feel right if I were planted in a Catholic country!" The Old Man's eyes twinkled.

Yes, it was good to be with Dad again. I would be his mother and his pal. I wouldn't fret him. I would just understand him; and love him.

"Give me of your bark, O Birch Tree!
Tall and stately in the valley!
I a light canoe will build me,
That shall float—and float—and float
Like—like . . ."

What will it float like, Dad? Will it float?

"Like a stone."

For a long time the Old Man spoke not another word. In the moonlight I could see reflected on his thin cheeks shadows of the memory pictures the poet's lines had awakened in him.

We were well out in the Caribbean. The night, soft and balmy. The air, refreshing and soothing as a mother's touch to a fevered brow. No wind. The sea was smooth, like a mirror. We could see flying fish; once, a flash of the dorsal fin of a shark.

The Old Man and I agreed to sleep "out on the porch." It was insufferably hot below. Our beds were spread on the top deck.

And there we lay, on our backs.

Neither of us talked for a long time. Once in a while the Old Man's hands clenched with the pain which seared his face like a hot iron. Yet through it all he was cheerful and seemed fairly happy.

There was something so fine about it all that I loved it—we must go on just this way forever. Surely, there could be no storm or stress after this. No sordidness. Death couldn't be real.

But at last I could stand the silence no longer. Beside me lay a monarch, brought low, but still a monarch. And I longed for his Birch-bark. I somehow hoped that the Old Man would pass the mantle of his charity and understanding onto my shoulders. I needed it. He could not use it much longer.

The relativity of things sometimes is brought home with tremendous force. Often I had felt old, and wise for my years, for I had suffered and strived and loved and aspired. But out here, alone with this great man, face to face with the universe and death, my whole mental view-point seemed to reverse itself. I was a child, trusting; filled with a simplicity hardly mine when I said my prayer at Mother's knee. When I contrasted the self of then with the tanned and freckled boy of the Pike days, it seemed a world had come between. And yet a greater gulf existed between me and the man at my side. He had lived it all out, been everywhere, seen everything, had been rich and famous, and was now poor, and dying.

He had touched so many things I had dreamed of, and still other things I had not yet the capacity to dream of. I kept wondering, wondering, as I lay there, how life must look to him. If only I could get at that mind of his! If only it were spread out before me, like a book!

To consider one phase only of the Old Man's life. I had saved thirteen hundred dollars—wealth it seemed when I remembered that not long ago a five-cent piece meant happiness.

and a silver dollar was the emblem of opulence. Yet, this man, who had started life in just the same way, had amassed a fortune. And lost it in a day! In a day! How would it seem to lose two million dollars? Why, I should have wanted to end life—the same day. But then, perhaps one could strike a rich vein again. Does luck like that come to one twice even if one is a geologist? Hardly. But the getting it didn't seem as wonderful as the loss of it. It seemed to me, as I lay there, that had I lost that much money, and had then been brought back to earth with a sudden jerk like that . . . I didn't know quite how I would feel. We can't feel what we haven't sensed. I wondered how the Old Man felt.

Would he ever talk? Mine was the impatience of youth. Even my appeal from "Hiawatha" had brought nothing—only those memories that still played hide-and-seek in the furrows of his face.

"Talk to me, Dad. Please talk to me." Still not a word.

By and by: "Son, give me your pillow." I helped him into an easier position. He got over on his side, rested that great head on his once powerful hand and supported himself on his elbow. "That's better." For a long time he said nothing more.

Then he began. I shall never forget that night—nor trade its memory for any earthly possession. His voice was hardly more than a whisper. Yet clear, mellow, sad.

"Son, I'm a chest of drawers. Behind some of them are others with hidden locks and secret springs. Behind and above and below these are still other compartments and little strong boxes full of papers. Behind these, a door, leading into the shrine of my soul. Would you look back there?

"I don't know," he went on, "whether I can take you in there. I suppose it is impossible. I rarely go back there myself; when I do I prepare an alibi. I don't let any one know I've gone. You see, Son, the world won't admit that there can be hidden chambers. It asks uniformity of us. Secrets are

immoral; new thoughts, immodest. And few dare such luxuries."

"But surely, Dad . . . Do you mean to say you ever had an immodest thought or did an immoral thing?"

"Yes, Son, and at once picked it up by the seat of its trousers and chucked it behind that innermost door. And I'm blest if I know which is me, this exterior that you see, or the secrets in the pigeon-holes and in that shrine back there. I really don't know. I've thought about it a lot. I wish I knew. Probably I'm all white birch-bark exterior, but within thin sap and broken cells and woodpecker nests and worms and ants and borers, and all the things that get into old trees. We are a colony inseparable. I try now and then to empty the contents of this or that drawer. I overhaul the secret cabinets. I even go back into that little dark room to try to set it in order, rejecting this and that.

"But I never show any one person the contents of all the cabinets. No one person could understand. My wife had access to certain ones. I show others to the children of my imagination—for I love to imagine I have children. I take intimate friends into still others—but there are different ones for different friends. Each one gets a different view."

"Why, Dad? Is it your fault, or theirs?"

"Fault, Son? Is there fault in the venom of the viper, or the pride of the rich, or the lechery of the harlot?"

"You see," he continued, "we show people what we think they want to see; and so we rarely exhibit our true selves. Again—we come in contact with a certain individual. We want to make an impression, good, bad, pleasing, winning—it depends upon circumstances. We show the contents of only such cabinets as we believe will produce the desired effect.

"You know how it is. You were a boy, on a farm. A playmate comes to see you. You get out your birds' eggs; you know he's interested in them. Before another boy, you spread your postage stamps. To another, you show the savage that is in you—your bow and arrow and your fishing tackle. Other

playmates you may take right into your own room, show them where you sleep. To one you will point out the worn spot in the carpet where you kneel at night. But when some other boy asks about that spot you avoid answering him, pretending never to have noticed it before—you don't know how it got there. When your sweetheart comes, you try to prove to her that you are a real man and could protect a woman."

I asked for an explanation. That, he maintained, is the eternal riddle, puzzling men and creating philosophers through all centuries. I could not quite follow him at the time—though it all seems simple now. Briefly, his argument was this: Explanations don't explain. They are merely brief descriptions. That is all science is. Laws of Nature are but brief descriptions. They have no objective existence—we cannot touch them or see them as we do a tree or a stone. They are purely mental—they exist only in men's minds. And so they may be revised—changed—rejected, as may any other mental concept. A perfectly good law of nature to-day may be like a perfectly good this year's bird's-nest next year, or a good man a few years hence—no good, scrapped.

It all seemed so mysterious—a great tragedy. Dad admitted it, but got comfort because most people don't know it. There is tragedy when we find it out—or rebel, when it's too late. The present is the *great* mystery; all else is mere groping in the dark. To seek to solve the mystery of the future is to strive to strain the dregs from wine.

"But what is the answer?" I asked.

"There can be no answer! But after all, things are what they seem—to some, white—to others, black—to still others, pea-green or sky-blue. But more important is that we don't forget that we can't, don't, and won't *explain* things. When we leave descriptive science we get into pure speculation—the nonsense of metaphysics. Many ancients and moderns have lost themselves in such speculation; and, losing themselves, were happy. We can only be guided by experience."

When Dad spoke of "experience," I recalled an episode of

boyhood days—and asked him why it was that I should show the little maid my prayer-rug and my gun—and run and jump for her? And show her my muscle? And brag and boast and lie about my achievements?

His reply was characteristic. "For the same reason that a bald-headed fat man of fifty, in love, haunts Turkish baths, tries to reduce, takes scalp treatment, has his face massaged, his nails manicured, and wears pink socks, lavender waistcoats, red ties, and blue underwear. All silk. When man invented love, he began to go in debt. He's up against the great *force majeure*. The stupidest country bumpkin, in love, thinks he whistles like a bulbul—if he's a vertebrate. The impulse to mate became inherent millions of years ago. Repress that impulse. . . . It's like denting a balloon—it bulges out on the other side or busts."

In other words, *love*. And so I asked Dad just what is it—this thing that we love? He answered: "The chase. Some are timid, some bold. But each according to his capacity and training lives right, thinks right, does right—and if the majority disagree, he pays. Man eats and cohabits; nature does the rest. Man presses the button; nature develops the picture."

I felt I ought to change the subject. Lanyon had brought me up to believe it wasn't quite decent to talk about sex. I hinted as much.

"I know Lanyon—not your Lanyon, Lanyons. I grew up in a Kansas Lanyon and was soaked in the sentimental twaddle of neurotics, the cant of the loveless, and the stupidity of the sexless. Sex? Why shouldn't it be talked about? And studied? It's more potent than gravity, and as big as life. Sex is life—fire, motion, energy. And they tell us to let it alone! What's history but a tale of love? They bid us know life, and yet ask us to be ignorant of love!

"There are men in our Lanyons, Son, who go crazy when sex is mentioned. It is taboo—like the question of personal immortality. They babble: 'He prayeth best who loveth best all things both great and small'—and blush when the word 'co-

habit' is uttered. They think they're radical when they swap Saint George Mivart or the Duke of Argyll for the book of Genesis! And wish they hadn't!"

I couldn't quite see what religion had to do with it. I asked.

"Not enough. Religion is love and love is force. Take your own case. You couldn't 'get religion' because you weren't in love, and you weren't in love because your passion was wasted—your love never got a real chance. You could no more have blossomed in Helen's presence than a morning-glory by moonlight. You were taught to inhibit love. Your Baptist ritual doesn't arouse youthful passion. But your innate creativeness rebelled against unintelligent restraint and your antiquated two-foot-rule education. Look here, Son, did you really love Helen?"

"I *thought* I did," I replied.

"Thought you did! 'Neither do I condemn thee; go and sin no more.' *Thought* you did! Why, love is like pneumonia—if you don't know you've got it, you haven't. You solve things by words. Did you feel your muscle? Did you admire Helen's white skin and her long hair? Did you pursue her? Did she flee—in a circle? Did you boys fight for the females? Did you love Helen's eyes, voice, chin, mouth, feet, hands, ankles, throat, eyebrows—her freckles, the way she walked, the way she used her hands? Did you or Helen know how to kiss? Nature takes more interest in that, Son, than in the denomination of your church or whether you substituted French for Latin and German for Greek. The human heart, after all, is the good old guide for conduct—beats the textbooks all hollow."

I'd often wondered what would have happened had I married Helen. This seemed a good time to ask.

The Old Man pondered awhile. "Well. . . . Probably the usual conventional life. Petty worries, sordid cares, traditional duties. You'd have become more womanly, Helen more manly. You'd have carried Helen's shawl and had your pockets stuffed with her gloves and her fan. The chief criterion would have

been: Can he feed her? And Lanyon would have said: Good match! But Lanyon wouldn't have got the better of either of you. Your wagon wouldn't have been hitched to a star. No. You would have put yourself in the yoke, Helen driving. And if Helen was disappointed in the ride she would have blamed the beast—not the driver.

"Advice is cheap. Helen would have been instructed. But that wouldn't make her mentally free—just have spread her love thin. She'd have been—simply your wife. Her whole emotional life would have been centred in you. You might have gone through with it. If things had gone badly, your Lanyon training would have expected you to protect her. But if Helen had been really sensitive, think how she must have suffered to have had to depend upon you, with your heart and soul no longer hers!"

Dad was shooting over my head. I knew that Helen and I could have been happy. But I had asked. . . . It seemed futile to expect this man to stick to a simple case. I somehow felt that the affairs of *my* heart were not to be accounted for by statements of general application. I was reminded of the time I went to Dad for advice about little Maria de Burgos and he . . . You know what he said. Just the same I knew that . . . Why not be frank? I knew that certain knowledge gained from the study of an embryo pig's brain could be useful in the study of the human brain—but what did all this have to do with Helen and me? Or just me? And so I asked what I might conclude from the case as he presented it. Did he get back to my case? Not at all.

"To conclude a subject is to drop it," he replied. "When we face the inevitable we must make the best of it. Public opinion wouldn't ask Helen to spurn your chivalry. But in time it will."

I asked him to define public opinion.

"Gosh, I don't know. Experience, I guess—traditional habit. But it's not *expert* opinion. Our social system is casual and inconstant. Its judgments are rarely based on its own

experience—too often on what somebody two thousand years ago said. American public opinion is a mosaic—of a thousand colours and shapes—an ideal of a thousand facets. Each colour, each shape, each facet, considers itself to be the only true one. Which is better? That depends on the pronoun—the person speaking or the person spoken to. We must study the ants and the bees.”

“And be animals?” I asked.

“Might as well be, if we can’t be different. Let us take ourselves as we are, and work bravely and understandingly for the benefit of—not of *our* family, or *our* nation, or *our* race—but of mankind!

“But we mustn’t take ourselves too seriously. When we do we crowd—we push. It’s not very important to very many people whether you live or not—you are not of world value. Dead Cæsar cannot stop a rat-hole, but Christ and Lincoln through all time will teach humility, humanity, and honour. They truly understood—they could really put themselves in other’s places.

“In every age some dreamer would rid society of dangers tending to inflict unnecessary pain, and seeks to lift the people up to his point of view, and is crucified, as were Christ and Lincoln. Every really great humanitarian leader is a criminal in the eyes of the danger he seeks to destroy.

“We don’t stick. Ideals rise into consciousness to be transformed into action—by the few. Then society slumps. Movements crystallise; and crystals resolve into the elements whence they came. The masses—I don’t mean hod-carriers and factory hands, or slums—I mean the masses to which you and I belong, are a slobby, immobile lump. The dough hardens because there isn’t enough yeast.

“New points of view often play the dickens with things. That’s the reason they move so slowly. The habitual is the easy road. It takes about three generations to break in a big new idea. That’s why the whole system of marriage remains so chaotic and iniquitous. It’s bound up with instinct, brains, ig-

norance, salvation, education, habit, ethics, wages, taxes, customs, and vested interests—in all of which we maintain a double standard! We've got to wipe that out. As it is, the Modern Woman is a monument—to our stupidity and her bondage.

"Oh, that we could strip our body of its gewgaws, our minds of its fears, and our speech of its conventions! And clean the barnacles from the flowerboat of marriage!

"We confuse vice and crime. You discovered Marie because society said you were not yet ready for Helen. And we law against these things! So did Augustus and Nero. And Theodosius and John Calvin. We law against . . . everything. And make an ignorant police-force guardians of morality and modesty. They tell women how to dress! Protect females from predatory males!"

Pretty advanced—all this seemed to me. But it left its impression—it counted! It was with Dad, as with Alexandra—my Lanyon training protested. But . . . Dad! Alexandra! They could do no wrong—think no mean thought. Still . . .

I urged one of my convictions—to be told that too often they are but excuses for excesses—that it is natural to invent rational explanations for habitual acts.

"That is what we have a brain for," Dad contended. "We are always trying to justify ourselves. What a nightmare this world would be if our brains didn't help us eternally to readjust ourselves! If we couldn't we'd go mad—or die of despair. My mother enlarged Heaven to get me in. Her own Heaven wouldn't accommodate me. She . . ."

Silence. The Old Man was thinking of his mother, no doubt. I was thinking of—many things. For years to come I could think of my mother. Just now my mind was busy—thinking. Love is power, eh? Motion. Energy. Fire. Is love *all* there is of life? I hadn't found it so. By no means. Still . . . Most of life, if not all?

Dad's revery passed. I wanted to ask him. Perhaps he tires. But—I put the question.

"There are several kinds of love. All of them combined don't constitute the whole of life—only a part of it."

"The best part?"

"Wait, and see. Every man must answer that question for himself—from his personal experience. Life is not long enough or deep enough to take everything that comes, even to sample them. He must select. Some he merely looks at; others he tastes. But he decides—whenever face to face with a woman. Mind you, he doesn't *know* this process takes place. But it does just the same. 'I love her, I love her not.' Sex consciousness having judged, the man himself reacts—according to his previous reactions, and by a whole lot of things—time, place, girl, inhibitions, ambitions. All these together tell him what to do. No man ever does the same thing twice—or thinks the same thing twice. By same, I mean same. It may seem so same he won't know that it's different, but the difference is there.

"If we only knew what woman thinks about these things! Some day she will tell us, frankly and truthfully. Now she tells only what we allow her to tell. Take your own case. Choose twenty acts of your life at random. To how many men would you be willing to talk frankly and freely of them—all that they mean and imply, and of the motives behind them? We are back to the secret cabinet again. But the motive that determines *what* you will tell, the spring which will open this or that drawer, lies buried deep within you, is part of your biologic nature, even deeper than your sex nature. More fundamental. This innate wanting to live—this determines what part of you you will exhibit. And don't forget, Son, that the virtuous man strips easily.

"Go back to the woman in the case," the Old Man continued. "This instinct to live is as strong in her as in us. She will show you only that which her intimate nature tells her she may safely reveal.

"Man at last has the courage to dare to question the doctrine of monogamy. He admits that *by nature* he is polygamic! Do

you suppose for a moment that woman's nature is radically different? It is and it isn't. I am not talking now about what men say of women—or women of women. Women even more than men are veneered with society's injunctions. 'Of course, women are monogamic!' Are they? Here is the difference. The male is charged with the procreation of the species; the female is concerned with her own brood. She must have insurance. Modern marriage generally is such insurance. But some women would like a few extra arrows for their bow. I'm not certain, Son, but I've a passing suspicion that the average normal woman would accept the Prophet's conception of Heaven if only the sexes were reversed.

"But they wouldn't admit it. Not even to themselves. And so I say to you, young man," and the Old Man's fingers found their way to his long locks in a way they had when he was pleased, "don't say anything about this to anybody. You'll get yourself in trouble if you do. Some would call this blasphemy—marriages are made in Heaven, and are eternal! Others would call you a social leper and want to drive you out as a moral pervert. Even pretty mean people are great sticklers for monogamy—in the other fellow. Vicariously virtuous.

"Curious," he rambled on, "how we continue denying the obvious! Things that hit us in the face. We refuse to see the wall against which we blindly butt our heads. Even our thin-skinned deacons frankly admire an antique Psyche, and accept her hairless body as normal—not knowing that the Greeks followed the oriental custom of depilation. And yet will blush before the Venus of Canova. It is too modern! It would horrify these same prudes to find a frank description of the female form in a magazine. The sculptor is more privileged than the painter, and we give the poet license still denied the writer of prose. In short we wrap ourselves in a cloak of inconsistencies, some really indecent because unnatural, but most of them as decent as moonshine on the sea or poppies in the wheat-field."

"Shall we ever get away from it?"

"Yes; and get back to it again—the tide ebbs and flows. In one generation man seems about to become sane and natural and simple and honest; twenty years later he is a damned fool. Or a Puritan bigot!"

On the third day the doctor found the Old Man unconscious. He failed rapidly. For two days he said hardly a word. I rarely left his side. The doctor told us he would probably not live to see Sandy Hook. On the fifth day he revived and I had my last talk with him. We had carried him on deck and made him as comfortable as possible. His helplessness was very sad. But his mind was clear, and apparently he suffered little. The furrows in his face seemed harrowed down by Nature—the planter and reaper.

And his face spoke for what was behind it. There was no make-up about the Old Man. He abhorred make-ups.

We were talking about this one night on our way south. He told me of his disgust the first time he saw his mother jam a pillow inside her corset, and that he had never been able to feel quite the same toward an aunt since he had discovered that her rounded bust was due to metal contraptions. Fashion, he held, is set by the demi-monde, and capitalised by Interests. No man would deliberately put his wife in hoop-skirts, or corsets. As for false hair—well, the Old Man and I quite agreed on that point. A wig seemed only less heinous. Paste diamonds and all the shams and snares and mutilations and illusions that women paint and gild themselves with—these, we agreed, were snares to catch hares. But would they hold them? Of course, after all, the Old Man said, it's only a matter of mental attitude—of habit. If people think that women should wear bathing costumes to church and mother-hubbards to balls and fig-leaves to weddings, well, then they will do it—and make new business for the countless thousands who prey upon the vagaries of human nature.

Little was said during the forenoon—he lay in a kind of stu-

pour. Toward sundown he brightened up a bit and—apropos of nothing—began: “Son, to-day you may see all my trinkets. Here are the keys,” opening one hand, “and here are the combinations,” opening the other, “to every secret nook and cranny in my cabinet. The Bark of this Birch Tree is withered and broken. But what I have, Son, is yours.”

I tried to tell the Old Man that I should like best to make him happy. He should talk, or not talk, as best pleased him; or I would talk to him.

Our minds do queer things. While this conversation was going on my brain was busy trying to compose a little epitaph for Dad’s tomb. I think the Old Man would have liked best to have had no tomb—to return, by way of the fishes, to the dust from which he came. I believe he would have been most pleased to have turned his body over to some great physician to use it to advance knowledge and possibly prolong the life of the next victim of cancer.

I kept thinking of that—my first effort of the kind. When the Old Man had breathed his last I pieced together my fragmentary ideas and I found this pleased me:

He loved to live,
For he loved life.
He loved . . .
And his answer was—
A Crown of Thorns.
And he loved that, too.

“Seek,” said the Old Man in this last talk, “and you may not find; but if I can lighten your burden, if I can make your life more simple or more natural—seek; use freely the keys and the combinations.”

Of the thousand and one things I wanted to ask one seemed more insistent than the rest—was he afraid to die?

“Only fear that my death will be misunderstood. Only regret that my inability to last a few days longer will pain those I love and who cherish me. They would be less unhappy if

they could see me again. I am sorry to take from them that pleasure, that satisfaction.

"No, I am not afraid to die. I regret dying. I have suffered, but life was still very full for me. The game was sweet. I am sorry to leave it. But death itself? It is so simple. The long sleep. I lose consciousness. I know nothing. No more suffering, nor pain. And, too, no more pleasure. Just that. The end. That's all. Finished.

"It has to come. We keep it off as long as we can. Our instinct to live keeps our pump going long after the will is tired out and the blood cannot nourish the body. But that other fear, you possibly had in mind, Son, that fear which the ignorant have, because they've been clubbed into living in accordance with a scheme which has been capitalised—of such fear I have no trace.

"There was a time, Son, when I wouldn't have told you this. I would have said to myself: Here is a young man who believes. That faith supports and cherishes him. I won't deprive him of it. It would be as if I should go to a family happy in squalour, sham, and illusion, and say: 'Your house is pasteboard, your shoes are paper, the husband is a liar, the wife an adulteress. The foundations of your life are laid upon quicksand.' No, I couldn't tell them that. It would make them unhappy.

"I believe in minding my own business. You asked me. I tell you the truth—as it seems to me. It may hurt, may grieve you; but no step in human emancipation is made save through the ashes of living faiths and often over the bodies of living men. You can't beat men into right living by threatening them with eternal punishment. It's never worked. We've got to get back to fundamentals. We've loaded the dice of life with ten thousand years of superstitious oddities and falsities. We pluck from every tree of every clime, seeking to know the unknowable. Yet the truth lies within our own breasts. A lie is a hateful thing, not because it is wicked to lie, but because a lie is contrary to nature—it has no selective value. Adultery

is bad, not because it is a sin, but because it is a betrayal, thereby searing at least two souls. There are pleasures that few, if any, can afford. We reform everything but our own selves. We are a vast complex reformatory. But we don't get at our individual self. Every one must tell the other fellow what to do.

"The man who brays loudest against the social evil and is the heaviest contributor to the Reform Fund, is often the man who, in his college days, spent a thousand a year for a mistress, and is still the most vicious prop in the vast system of selfish personal aggrandisement. He is the real modern villain. But he gives! To the church, the Orphans' Home, the Y. M. C. A., the Symphony. And presides at banquets, and lays cornerstones, founds colleges, and is the biggest-hearted man in town. He is a composite of Admiral Blake, Captain Kidd, and Emperor Nero. He is no common thief. That is not—the Great Game. Your Napoleon of Finance lies about his taxes, sweats his labour, waters his bonds, and hogs opportunity. And we name sleeping cars after him because he is a Whale of a Success, a Napoleon of a Financier."

Again the Old Man was getting me in over my head. I knew little of the fine distinctions or intimate relationships of economics and ethics. Dad's talk seemed almost . . . No, he *could* not be a Socialist! To think that would be to wrong him.

Nor was I at all prepared to accept his heroic denial of bodily immortality. Oh, I knew the argument. It seemed plausible. But . . . I was afraid. At any rate there must be a survival of the soul! But the Old Man could discover no psychic apart from physical expression. He held that in the history of religion can be found the biologic reasons for the belief in souls.

"Besides," he maintained, "there is no reason why consciousness should persist after bodily existence ceases. No reason save the wish. But the fact that I have that wish is not neces-

sarily significant. It is not the only wish evolved by the human intellect that will never be attained."

The sun had set. I was alone with Dad.

"Son," he said, after a long interval of silence, "don't worry. Don't fret. Don't stew. Do what you know is right—the best you know how. You don't know why you are here. But here you are. Make the best of it. Avoid pain—or pleasure which may result in pain. You can't afford to give any one pain—it will come back to hurt you. Things that hurt are dangerous. Take expert advice. Don't be at the mercy of externals. Test things."

One other question kept going through my mind—I wanted to put it to the Old Man. He lay watching me. Finally he said, "Come on, Son, let's have it."

"It's this, Dad. Was there ever a perfect life?"

"There is no 'perfect.' 'Perfect' implies the absolute. There are many excellent lives, and many called successful. But success? Success? I don't know what success is. Was Cæsar a success? Savonarola? or Joan of Arc? Napoleon? Henry Clay? I really do not know. Consult your dictionary. But I think a fair test of an excellent life is: Would the owner want to live it over again? Is it *worth* repeating?"

"Say, Dad, suppose you could live it all over. . . ." It was like a tonic—he brightened perceptibly and promptly replied:

"Sure." And then he added: "But I'm not dead yet—I've made my peace with—myself." Then he paused a moment. His eyes twinkled a wee bit. "Son," and he beckoned me closer, "I'm thankful there's no preacher aboard to worry himself about my . . . Say, Son, what keeps the church alive today—the church as you and I know it? Moral ignorance. Men live by it. Healers by the very law which impels success are driven to propagate and magnify the ills they must cure to live. They must fight against progress, discovery, new thought. They are not deliberately mean. They, too, are bundles of habit; and habit demands repetition. They just naturally hate change. Back of them are the 'interests'—theological semi-

naries, medical schools, publishing houses, countless other agencies. If they are to succeed, the game of life must be played according to habitual rules."

Again a long pause. There was one other question I wanted to ask Dad, the most vital of all. I had not dared. Would he come back again? I waited, on, and on—on the bare deck by his bed.

"How long will he live?" I asked the doctor.

"Perhaps till morning, perhaps two days. But I think he will not regain consciousness."

I waited. I wanted to ask. . . . And then I said to myself: "What would Dad have me do in a case like that?" And I knew what he would say.

He would say: "Son, be true to yourself and deal with your fellow men as you would want them to deal with you!"

There was the rub. How would I want to be done by? What was my true self?

Hour after hour I sat pondering this question.

The Old Man had been carried to his cabin. He would never speak to me again. I had bid him good-bye, though he did not know it.

Next morning he left us.

"Not being afraid of death, I addressed myself cheerfully to the life I had to live—had, I say, for though I sometimes had no *wish* to live, the *will* to exist was always strong in me." By these words I remembered the Old Man.

CHAPTER XIX

WASHINGTON

HOME!

Home from abroad!

Foreign labels on my bag and trunk!

And the ship's hold full of tons of success. *My success.*

It seemed mighty fine to get back. My heart pounded. My cheeks burned. Was there ever such a harbour? Such a country? The Goddess of Liberty!

And to get back on the Fourth! The great American Eagle was loose. All the way up the bay we ran the gauntlet of full-dressed ships to the incessant boom, bang of countless cannon crackers. Plenty of sunshine, colour, noise. Everything as it should be. Myriads of flags—the handsomest, the best, the gloriousest flag in the Universe.

My flag! My country!

I magnified its virtues—denied its faults. And conjured up—visions of real beds, real streets, real trains, real things to eat. Watermelon. Cherry pie. Corn on the cob. Fried chicken. And real beefsteak—pounded, floured, and fried—with real maple syrup. Yes, New York, gateway to all these things, looked mighty good.

Night of the next day found me in Lanyon. I created as great commotion as could ever Captain Kidd's arrival home have created. When I struck that town and the blessed old farm, I knew that everything and everybody would look good, but I didn't know they would be so glad to see me, or that I would be so glad to see them.

Fifty years seemed to have passed in two. I didn't feel

fifty years older; but a thousand years wiser. I hadn't grown taller, but I seemed to be looking down from a higher plane. I had an advantage over Father I never had before. As for Billie, well, Bill was old enough now to harbour just a wee bit of resentment at my airiness. But Bill was pretty decent. He tried not to show it. But I knew how he felt, for I knew how I would feel if the positions were reversed. Ann, dear, good, sweet Ann, she was just all wild-eyed curiosity—keen on seeing what I had brought her.

I had spoils for everybody, and I dispensed with the lavish hand of a man who had captured a prize on the Spanish Main. Santa Claus had never delivered so much at one time in that house. Father was pleased with my liberality. But I could see he thought me—well, pretty reckless. Wasn't at all certain that I wouldn't finally land in the poorhouse. That sort of thing never worried me. I have always been just that much of a fatalist. If it is the poorhouse at the end, all right, let her come. I will have had a fling at the world in the meantime.

Then I went to see Deke. Life already seemed too short for all I wanted to do—but I simply couldn't refuse him.

The first thing I noticed was that his house wasn't nearly so well furnished as was that of Señora Bustamente de Burgos. Deke's wife was a comely lass—bright and neat and active. But I could see several things at once—some that Deke could not see, I thought. You know it is that way sometimes. A newcomer sees things we can't because we've been looking at them all the time.

It was plain that Deke was afraid of her. Yet her fists were hardly big enough to knead bread, and her face was more saintly than vixenish. But Mrs. Deke's father had been a banker. Deke was only a farmer's boy. I couldn't quite see how she could discount the fact that while he had been east at school for several years, she had spent her time capering around the country to picnics and dances. But she did. She

made him feel that his Harvard experience was something of a handicap.

Before I had been in their little parlour ten minutes, I started in, I have forgotten just how, but probably something like this, "Say, Deke, remember that day we went to Higham! Got that clumsy old dory and rowed way out to sea and had to fight for three hours against the tide, thinking all the while that we possibly never would get back? And how we got to Boston too late for supper? And then stood up during a whole symphony concert? Huh! And then do you remember after boarding the Charles River street-car for Cambridge, how we discovered that neither of us had a durned cent, and the stony-hearted conductor made us get off? Three long miles! And how in the moonlight, as we passed a marble-yard down in the Port, we recognised a statue of our late martyred President and how we saluted and said, 'Mr. Garfield, will you lend us two nickels to get us to Harvard Square?' "

It was probably something like that. I doubt if I got so far along. I could see old Deke's face begin to congeal. He winked at me with the eye which was invisible to his lord and master, and made some excuse to get me out of the room. A subdued voice, meant to be nonchalant, said, "Look here, old man, if you don't mind, we'll take a walk and talk over those old days. I don't know why, but my wife seems kind o' sore about that eastern stuff."

Other sensitive spots came out during dinner. I was congratulating Deke on his luck in finding such a decent professorship and on the reputation his splendid work was getting him with scientific men. Mrs. Deke's comment was not much, as rated by the number of words used, but I got a distinct impression. She didn't think much of science. She spoke, trying to appear casual, of men who did "real" things and of the days when Mr. Deke would do something "real big."

In an effort to be amiable, I told them how attractive their home seemed, and I meant it too. It *was* an attractive home.

Her only comment was, "Oh, it isn't so bad. It will do for the *present*."

It was pathetically evident that she wasn't living in that house at all. Her soul had housed itself in the kind of a mansion she meant to have "when he had done something big."

It was all a bit disconcerting. Would Helen have been like that? Would Helen have shut her heart against the present, to cavil at it, and make it seem trite? I thought not. But I couldn't be sure because I seemed continually to be finding out that women do a great many things which Lanyon taught me they couldn't, wouldn't, and shouldn't do.

I went away feeling a bit sorry for Deke. I tried to intimate as much. He wouldn't see it that way. And that was fine of him, of course.

"Why everything is all right, old man," he said. "I've got a good job. I like my work. Have plenty of friends. I'm only a little over seventeen hundred dollars in debt. I'll have the house paid for in nine years. Why, Great Scott," he concluded, "we're mighty happy!"

So is everybody who thinks so.

There remained two days of my vacation at home. I had given myself ten days for it. At first that seemed—not too much, but—well, ample. Father didn't think it was enough. It was his idea that I ought to stay at home and "rest a while." Rest? What from? I had never done a full day's work in my life. I never will if I can help it. I said a *full* day. Picking stone is work, but Bill and I always managed to shave down the day just a little. We called it "hornswoggling" Father. I have sweated; but sweat isn't work. You work when you aren't doing the thing you'd rather do than anything else. Nature didn't intend her creatures to *work*. Work is a human invention—discovered a long time ago. In its early form it meant making the other man do it for you. A staggering amount of human energy and ingenuity has gone into the invention of new ways to get the other fellow to do it.

As I said, Father wanted me to rest—thought I should stay at home two months! I hadn't had a "vacation" for a long time! I wondered what he thought I was doing on the long voyage from Lima to Panama and from Colon to New York.

We held a family, a Low family, council, with Father at the head of the table, Mother at the foot, Bill and Ann on one side, and big brother, that's me, on the other. We were at dinner—out in the yard, under the maple tree, near the old pump. Father had made his little joke, and I had got him a pitcher of water "from the northernmost side of the well."

The thing had been discussed before—my "career." In fact, it seemed to me we'd been discussing careers ever since it was discovered that I was to have one. I never knew who made the discovery; but that is an unimportant detail.

"I do wish you wouldn't, Young." That was Father.

"Now, Paw, let the boy alone." That was Mother. "How can you tell what he wants to do?"

And so we had the pros and cons of this and that. The only thing left for me was to choose, not the thing I really wanted most to do, but of the things I could do that which pleased me most. Even Bill and Ann took part in the discussion. For two years I'd been my own boss, a free ranger over sea, desert and mountain. I'd had affairs and looked eternity in the face while I listened to the Old Man. And here I was back on the farm being passed around the table as one would a cake, while they decided where they would cut it. But I couldn't tell them that.

As the visit home wore on, I found, much to my surprise, that I, too, had lots of drawers in my cabinet that it didn't seem just worth while to open up there. And that I had developed a certain taste for secret recesses and receptacles. Why, I even had a shrine started. I didn't go there often; but I knew that Alexandra was there just the same. I couldn't talk about those things out under the maple tree. I couldn't throw my hand down on the table and say, "Here are the keys and combinations, help yourself." It would have been like inviting

a child to taste freely of the contents of the bottles in old Dr. Hancock's medicine chest. Some of them they wouldn't understand; a few might prove almost fatal.

I worried about that so much that night I couldn't sleep. I finally got up and in my nightgown and bare feet went down into the yard and sat in the swing for more than an hour. In getting back I got a stone-bruise on my left heel.

At last I fell asleep and had an awful dream—I had told Father about Marie and about—Holy Smoke, I had told him everything!

He wouldn't believe, I dreamed, my story about little Jesus Maria. That was the first thing. Next, I must never, never tell anybody in Lanyon about Marie. As for Alexandra—well, that was the crowning crime of a misspent life. But infinitely more heinous—worse than anything and everything else, was my doubting one single word of the Bible—that was to think disrespectfully of God. I seemed to get the idea in that dream that philandering, gambling, drinking—yes, even murder, were pardonable and condonable offences. But to lift one finger against one word between the covers of the Holy Word was—well, that condemned me utterly and for eternity.

I went back to the swing. I couldn't risk having another dream like that.

After all there wasn't much to argue about. No matter what I was to do, I knew and the folks knew that I had to go East and unpack and catalogue my material. I must at least do that much. And I really wanted to do it. I felt I owed that to society—I'd always been particular about social duties. Indeed, I prided myself on my social instincts. I always tried to be a member of the community. I know now that I didn't want to be at all. I know that I've never had a downright desire to stand in the plain with the crowd. My earliest ambitions were to be a clown, a tin-pedlar, a missionary; all these took me up to a mountain peak of my own, where I looked down—to amuse, trade with, or reform the masses.

Well, I was to do my duty by my collection and by my patron. The question was, "What next?" East or West? I was to be a scientist and a professor. That much seemed clear. In the East I could work up in some university, museum, or academy, to an honourable position in the scientific world. I would begin with an unusually fair start, because I had had good luck, and I proposed to make the most of it.

Or, I could accept a position in Lanyon. That meant a full professorship at once with a salary that seemed large to Father, and as he put it, "Nice enough to enable you to get married and settle down at once and start a family of your own and become a useful and valuable member of society."

Father knew all the things that he could see and feel. His fundamental trait was biologic rather than sexual. Life meant safety to him. Lanyon was a safe thing—no venture, no risk, no fear of the poorhouse at the end of the lane, and hence, according to his Q. E. D. mind . . . Well, as Father put it in his plaintive, appealing way, "Why not, Young, put that other thing out of your head? It is all foolishness. Come and stay with us."

Was Father thinking of me or himself? Did he give the whole thing away when he said, "Come and stay with us?" It did not occur to me to raise that question at that time. If I had, I should have shamed it out of existence. It would have seemed base and contrary to the spirit of the Commandments.

Mother and I won the day. We knew we should. We always did. But as I look back over those years, I wonder which, after all, was the better plan. I wonder and wonder, and turn it this way and that, and I get—nowhere. As Dad would say, "I am not Providence, or nature, or destiny."

In Washington, during Dog Days. And I worked and sweated. And am tremendously happy. All the while wished myself back among the snow tops of the Andes, or the salt deserts of Peru, or the high plateau of Bolivia, or the hot jungle of the Beni, or . . . Why not be frank? I wished I had a barrel

of money and owned a yacht and was off somewhere at the end of the earth, alone with Alexandra, and Paul, and little Pauline. But I wouldn't admit, even to myself, that this was what I really wanted. At any rate, I didn't at the time. I said:

"Look here, young man, you've barely begun a tremendous work. Your function in life is to discover missing links, develop organic from inorganic matter, to produce living matter. And . . . why shucks, everything is yet to be done. We know next to nothing about man. Where did he come from? How long ago was it? Who built the first fire and where? Who domesticated the horse and the ox? Who invented the axe, the plough, and the razor? Who told the first lie and wore the first corset? Why has a handful of white men in less than a fiftieth of the span of human history made Europe their own, conquered and killed off the natives of the two Americas, bully-ragged and browbeaten Asia, and carved Africa as one would a cheese?

Yes, there were plenty of things to do. Infinitely more than I dreamed of during those Dog Days in Washington.

Washington is a beastly place in summer. It stinks. Its rickety old markets, its brazen "tenderloin," its shabby negro huts, its provincial shops down the Avenue—over all of them hangs a blighting pall. The grass goes to hay over in the Mall. And that old tin shed—cross between barn and railway station, where I worked and sweated, which this glorious land of ours boldly called its National Museum—boils, and broils, and reeks with relic-loving countrymen who come to the nation's capital in crowds on cheap excursion trains.

Honest work in an interesting subject carries its own reward. But I didn't feel that I was getting enough of it. Somehow I had expected that when I walked down Pennsylvania Avenue barbers would pause while lathering the faces of victims, that bartenders would halt mint-juleps in mid-air, and that newsboys would stop their cries of "Double Huxtras," to

call to the country visitor: "See that young feller? That's Dr. Low—just back from South Ameriky—discovered the missing link between reptiles and birds—found human skulls a hundred thousand years old."

I knew that youth was against me. But that couldn't keep me out of my own forever. It was only a question of time until I would be secretary of the Smithsonian Institution. They might even create for me a Secretaryship of Culture. Of course, that would be a Cabinet office and carry with it some dignity and honour. But, after all, what are Cabinet positions? The Cabinet was certainly no fit place for a scientist. Moreover, it was only a temporary job and Heaven only knew when the Democrats would get in again.

I think I've never told you about my politics. Father was a Republican. I mean he is. He has always been. He belongs to the generation of men who were born one way or the other. I once questioned the statesmanship of James G. Blaine—spoke rather disparagingly of him. I think Father never quite forgave me for that. Not that he was angry with me. His was the compassion of a father for a birthmarked son. Mother's family were all Democrats. A long line of them, beginning way, way back before the war. If we'd a Monarchical party and Mother had belonged to it I would have been a rabid Tory.

This feeling boys have for mothers is very subtle. Is it because we first begin to develop our senses on her breast that we never can free ourselves of the notion that a woman's breast is the most beautiful thing in the world? There is reason enough that it should be so. We mouthed and fingered that breast and had instinctive pleasure in its odour and turned to it for nourishment and life itself. A day comes when it is shut from view and for the next fifteen or twenty years we go on wondering what it looks like, and yearning and longing to get back to it again.

No, somehow—and I couldn't understand why at the time—I didn't seem to make much of an impression that summer in

Washington. I was hurt. I thought I had a good deal of hay down—but I couldn't make the mows fill up fast enough to suit me.

Why, I asked myself, is everybody so selfish? Why won't people be fair? I had invested a part of my capital, a small part of it to be sure, in a clipping bureau, but the returns were very meagre. I was pained at the lack of enthusiasm over the discovery of antique man in America. It grieved me that so few people were interested in flying reptiles. People went right on saying that honest Senators were as scarce as hen's teeth. Why, confound them, hen's teeth weren't scarce at all. There was a time when birds had teeth. Nobody cared.

I think it must have been about this time that I began to—no, it couldn't, I couldn't have begun to weigh values yet. I couldn't have begun to question the motives which had sent me out on this quest for glory.

I made few friends. Chiefly, I suppose, because Washington was pretty well deserted. Nobody but clerks and stenographers there. I had nothing in common with them! I considered that I belonged to a different caste, though I was not conscious of it.

It seemed the summer would never end. I longed for the real tropics. They were clean and fragrant, wholesome and cool. I wanted to get my shoes off. I hated the stiff collar and boiled shirt that I thought I had to wear. My arms ached to climb a hickory-nut tree. My belly yearned for the splash of the sea.

I had a whole cornucopia of yearnings. A few months before I would have scorned the idea that I could be dissatisfied in Washington. If only I could have had the Old Man to talk with!

I had been thinking it over and putting it off—I knew I ought to do it. So one Sunday afternoon I went to call upon his wife. She had bought a new house out Chevy Chase way. It smelled like a paint shop it was so new. Every time you put

a foot or hand down on the veranda, you pulled away pine-pitch or green paint and tracked it into the house, and got it into your hair.

Mrs. Garvin was in black, of course. She didn't know why. But it was decidedly becoming. She wore black silk stockings and black jet earrings, and an imitation black pearl necklace. She had black borders on her visiting cards and stationery. I suppose she thought black. At least she thought she ought to. She tried to leave no stone unturned toward advertising her widowhood.

But I couldn't talk to that woman about the Old Man. In five minutes I knew she didn't know him at all. She spoke rather caressingly of how well she had invested certain funds he had left. "It is a great pity, too, that he did not follow my advice to take out a larger life insurance policy. True, he carried all he thought he could.

"But you know," she added, "it's so hard to be poor once you have been rich." And she proceeded to preach me quite a little preachment on the value of being humble and cheerful in adversity. But when we began to discuss the various angles of this adversity, it took the form of regret for the loss of the Old Man's fortune and that he hadn't yielded to her wish for more life insurance. Not a word of regret at having lost the companionship and the sweet comradeship of that big generous soul. Not a word of realisation that she had driven him from home to hunt for a place where he might think out loud.

Terribly sorry for herself, was Mrs. Garvin. No doubt whatever of that. She was a poor widow! And as she pitied herself, she cried softly. Does one always cry when one pities one's self? Is grief, after all, purely selfish and entirely objective? When I look into my own soul I realise that my grief at the loss of the Old Man was selfish. It was some time before I discovered this. I knew that I wanted him. I had lost something. I needed him. Finally I had to admit that my sorrow was not for him at all—merely and purely for myself.

It is not human nature to pity one's self too long. We only do that as long as we can get something out of it. Mrs. Garvin transmuted all her grievances into luxuries.

Face to face with the futility of self-pity, we turn to something else.

I did.

December was in sight, and Christmas, and the New Year. My work was practically finished. The material had been sorted, most of it identified and all of it catalogued. It was ready now for some bone-shark to potter over through the winter months of years to come. I had already made up my mind that I was not to be that bone-shark.

I hadn't fitted into Washington. I was afraid that I might if I stayed longer. The very idea of becoming part of that smug machine made me faint. There were too many cripples around Washington; too many people who got in with a pull and were rotting in a jungle of mediocrity. Even old Lima looked pretty good after five months in Washington.

There was Lanyon; that job was still open. "The rolling stone gathers no moss," I said to myself. "Better try Lanyon." But that other side of myself, the Young Low side, said, "Better be a barnacle on a moving ship than a moss-gathering boulder."

I didn't want to be a barnacle. I had no use for moss. I didn't know quite what I did want. But it wasn't moss. Then there was the offer from the Pennsylvania Institute to take charge of its bones. Philadelphia wouldn't be such a bad place. Rather quiet, perhaps.

But close to New York.

I had about made up my mind to go to Philadelphia when fate intervened—I have said before that if you have some other name for it, you may use it—in the person of Mr. Arthur Buckingham.

I had gone up to the Capitol. It was one of the easiest ways

of getting out of Washington on Sunday afternoon. I was sitting on the steps smoking a cheroot—probably spitting off at one side. Had the whole place to myself. Looked up and saw Arthur Buckingham, just as he said, "Well, I'll be damned!"

We dangled our feet over the marble parapet and swapped harmless lies and boasted. Finally he got round to inquiring about my business. I spread my cards in front of him, just as I had done in that poker game in his room. I dealt out the whole pack. He turned up one hand after another—and threw them all down in disgust. "Damn it all, man," he said, "there isn't a banco hand here."

"Not one."

"No, sir, not one single damned one."

"Well, you deal 'em, Buck."

"Say, Kid, why don't you do something you really like? Why in God's name are you always doing something just because it's easy?"

"All right, Arthur, you deal 'em."

"That was a swell little game, wasn't it?"

"Yes, but I have had better games since."

"P. G.?"

"No! I don't know the difference between a seven-card-peek and a spit-in-the-ocean. I tell you, man, poker is the last resort for the adventurer who has nothing else in this world to do."

"In love, eh?"

I hadn't just thought of it that way. I had been in love with Alexandra, of course, and with all kinds of things. But the real reason was I'd been so in love with the game of life that I hadn't needed to resort to the more mechanical game of chance, for interest.

"Why don't you marry the girl?"

That seemed like prophecy, coming from Arthur Buckingham. I tried to change the subject. He brought me back. "Well," he said, "I pushed you a banco hand. Why don't you bet?"

Now, Arthur Buckingham was a commercial traveller. He only got good sleep in a Pullman car. He knew only two kinds of conversation, selling goods and swapping yarns in a smoking compartment or a brothel. I suppose he had other sides. I knew that he had when he left New England. But he had become . . . just a plain, vulgar, fat, degenerate drummer. He was a high-class pedlar. He had no one best bet for me.

He hadn't opened a switch leading in a new direction. But he had derailed me.

He had made me bring into the front part of my mind the facts of the life I was leading. I had been accepting them more or less naively. I felt rather certain I was not destined for a paleontological existence. But I didn't feel it strongly enough to translate it into action. I could—and probably should—have gone on with the thing. But now . . . No, I couldn't go on indefinitely. I was a bit envious of Arthur's smug success, his sleek clothes, his bold front—yes, even his illicit amours. But . . . No, I did *not* want to be a Commercial Traveller. An honourable and a necessary occupation, no doubt—but not my line. I thought I should prefer *making* goods. Of all the goods to be made the intellectual seemed to hold out the greatest promise of substantial reward and permanent self-satisfaction. Buck had derailed me.

It came just three weeks after Thanksgiving. I remember that, because I had gone home for the holiday and the usual family gorge. I had promised Father I would give him my plans within three weeks. It was the morning of the last day of grace.

In the first delivery of mail came a letter from Russia. From Alexandra. Her letters had been less and less frequent. In a dull unwitting way—in a way that hurt—I had gradually reconciled myself to the idea that she had . . . I tried to reconcile myself.

It wasn't a long letter. Alexandra used words as the woodsman his axe. Every stroke made a chip fly.

"Mon Ami: The children really want to see, to talk with you; to look at the world again through your eyes. Their continued importunings have helped *me* to decide. Perhaps I, too, really want to see you. And so I ask you to make an experiment. Come to Europe for a year—indefinitely while all is well—as tutor to Paul and Pauline, as General Protector of the little Lanfiere family. We really need you.

"On January 3rd we leave Warsaw for Paris. Will remain till the middle of February, when we go to Taormina. Sail from New York as soon after Christmas as filial piety permits—and let me know the name of your ship and the date of your arrival in London. Some one will meet you.

"ALEXANDRA."

A little letter, but a world of possibilities in it!

I trembled from head to foot. What would come out of all of this? It was rather more vague than the nature of immortality. But I had a feeling that, like immortality, the future would take care of itself. As I read the letter over again a thousand reasons why I should not go struggled for recognition—to be ruthlessly swept aside as fast as they appeared by a note so overwhelmingly dominant that I knew deep within me, even before I had finished the letter the first time, that the label of my next occupation would be: Tutor to the Lanfieres.

Would I become . . . Was one of the great dreams of my life to come true?

And Europe? To see Europe? Another dream to come true! To tutor two children seemed hardly . . . Well, it wasn't the biggest job on earth. But it pleased me greatly that Alexandra thought me worthy to be their companion. Was it for this that I had toiled in laboratory and field for five years? Still, if the Master had set a little child to lead them, could I deem it beneath my dignity to lead little children? What would I not have given to have had such a pal as I knew I could be to those two children?

Europe—London, Paris, Italy . . . to see the Old Home—to study history where history was made—to . . .

What would Garvin say? Wouldn't he say: "Looks like

opportunity, Son. I doubt if you can afford to miss it”?

No indeed. I couldn’t afford to miss it. I could afford a year or two from my life’s work.

Life’s work? Wouldn’t Garvin say: “Life is work and work is life. An opportunity is before you. You can learn more from those two children than they will from you”?

I doubted that—at that time. But against a thousand Lanyonesque reasons why I shouldn’t go to Europe, I could oppose one reason of my own why I should. And that reason was . . . Alexandra said she and the children *needed* me. That was reason enough.

Needed me.

And it will be a new work—interesting, important, fascinating. Well, I’ll simply have to postpone “settling down.”

Before I went to bed that night I had engaged passage on the *Umbria*, sailing from New York December 29th.

CHAPTER XX

AN INTERLUDE

THERE is nothing in the world like a voyage at sea. Once is enough for some people. I never get enough of it—the longest voyage is over too soon. There is a reason why man discovered every island in the world long before he learned the use of steam. Our love of the sea comes honestly. It goes back to the days when sun-kissed primordial slime set up the primordial protoplasm from which you and I have come down in an unbroken line.

My voyage on the *Umbria* was a predestined success. I was going to Europe! To see the most wonderful woman in all the world!

I found a letter from Alexandra in my cabin. She told me where to go as soon as I arrived in London, and that she herself had crossed twice on the *Umbria*! That gave the ship a touch of sanctity. I wished she had told me the numbers of her cabins. They would have been sacred. I was just that . . . I was in love. I should have haunted them.

Each hour I grew more restless and more impatient. I tried to walk myself to sleep. I was a prisoner at the bar awaiting the verdict that would set me free, a bridegroom awaiting the consummation of the marriage. But it wasn't that. Not that alone. That was only a small part of it. And I tried to keep it in the background—saying to myself, "That isn't all of my love for Alexandra. By no means. To *see* her again, to hear her voice, to watch her eyes, to breathe the odour of her hair. . . . To be able to feel myself free, face to face with her. To throw off conventions. To talk with her, soul to soul. To have to hide nothing. To . . ."

I was not ashamed to be impatient.

For two days I stayed shut up within myself, wrestling with impatience, caressing the joy of anticipation. It must have been that long before I realised I had fellow passengers. I knew they were there, of course—a surprisingly large crowd for that time of the year. I had expected to have the boat to myself.

I had worried myself and vexed the steward in selecting a table. I was among the last to apply to that august personage. I was contemptuous of those who sent money in advance for the choicest positions. It seemed as if the rich could bribe their way to anything. What show is there for a poor man, a dreamer, a poet, a scholar, a philosopher—or any other atavistic relic of modern society? I envied the rich! Hated them.

I ventured to indicate two or three unassigned places on the dining-salon plat, and inquired who sat here and who sat there. The names sounded uninteresting and I passed them by. At last the steward became impatient and took matters into his own hands. "This will be your seat," he said. I accepted, meekly as one does on his maiden voyage on a big ship—humbly, as one should who has no gifts to bestow.

When I came back into the world of the ship and could see things objectively, I found myself between two men; one, and the more important, at least he so considered himself, was Mr. Jonathan Hordern. The other was Professor Henry Flodden.

Hordern did not think much of Flodden. That was my first impression. Next, I concluded that Hordern was a good poker player. He could play bobtail talk like a royal flush. When he knew he had the best of an argument he would look as innocent as a child—you would be quite unprepared for the shock he would hand you. Flodden was no mean antagonist—rather waspish. He had a stinger and buzzed around. That kept Hordern fighting with his hat.

General argument—*America vs. World*. Hordern defended.

Flodden switched a good deal. At the end of the meal I didn't quite know which side Flodden was espousing. To satisfy my curiosity I joined them in the smoking room.

Hordern produced a huge cigar-case. The brand was unfamiliar—but I knew little of such things. I examined the brand—Hordern's Brand!

"Yes," he replied, to my look of wonder, "I can't get quite the cigar I want in Kansas City. I send a man to Cuba once a year. He buys my tobacco. Have twenty-five thousand made up. Held till I requisition them, thousand at a time."

"You must be a great smoker, Mr. Hordern?"

"Oh, rarely more than twenty-five a day. I give away a good many."

Wonderful cigar! Never smoked anything like it.

"What shall we drink?" Mr. Hordern took rum. Acquired the taste when he filibustered in Cuba. Said he preferred *pulque*. Flodden took cognac. I was in the sticky days of curaçao. Called it "*frailisao*" to show I had been in Spanish America. Hordern bit.

"Speak Spanish?" I replied in that tongue. He came back in Spanish—the kind the Jamaica negro talked on the Canal Zone in French days.

Flodden liked a good cigar, but he puffed away with a protest. He didn't like Hordern well enough to enjoy Hordern's private stock. He kept right on buzzing, trying to sting Hordern. Now and then he'd get a rise, as—"Aw, hell! you p'f'ssers [my first intimation that Flodden was a professor, and I wondered if Hordern had already sized me up as being in that flock] make me sick." Flodden made no reply. He only looked the contempt he felt. Hordern didn't deserve this contempt. But Flodden was as fearless with his face as with his tongue. Terribly keen.

Hordern's ability to quote statistics was alarming. They beat against us like hail: cold, pitiless, overwhelming. You could only stand with your back to the storm and wait till it

blew over. I think he was the most perfect statistical liar I have ever known. He was a fine sample of American who interprets Providence according to his own experience. Successful, of course.

Flodden had heard Hordern's story, but he wanted me to hear it, so he could hold it up to scorn—when Hordern wasn't about.

"Mr. Hordern, I wish you would tell that story to Low—the story you told me last night—how you developed the South-west!"

Flodden had opened the dike and the water was soon up to our ears.

Every self-made man is entitled to shake hands with himself. And usually does—on the slightest provocation. But it seems a pity there should be only one criterion for self-madness, or at least only one standard by which the degree of self-madness may be measured—power—power to control the destinies of one's fellow men and keep out of jail.

The hole Flodden made in the dike had hardly given vent to a rivulet before I was aware that I was listening to a story-book tale. Not the kind we used to read in McGuffey's Third Reader—attic and haymow kind.

Hordern was tremendously pleased with himself. He hugged himself as one after another he dragged forth his scalps of success until he had a great heap about him.

Puritan. Of course. Extreme unction inhered in the successful descendant of a real Pilgrim—a regular out-and-out Mayflowerer. Carried his whole stud-book in his head. True, a gap of about one hundred years separated alleged known from the really known; but Hordern filled in that gap with a generous wave of his ample hand. Legerdemain. "Now you see it; now you don't." We weren't a bit interested in his pedigree. He would force us to be interested. He had spent money on it; it must yield a profit.

Hordern was in the Civil War—commissary department. It made a man of a green country bumpkin, and gave him a life

pension, though he was as sound as a dollar when the last shot was fired. It took him out of himself, gave him something to think about, ambition, a new vision.

Then he "rustled." A lucky deal in cattle gave him a start. For forty years now he had rolled on gathering cattle, coal-fields, and zinc mines, all extremely profitable when Congress had its duty pointed out to it. Got rebate or bonus on every head of cattle shipped into or out of Kansas City. And boasted of it. Manipulated land laws and got hold of vast tracts of coal land.

Mr. Hordern was a successful pioneer.

Flodden made an unfortunate remark about Kansas City. It came just after Chicago had been ushered into the conversation. Flodden had ventured to admit that Kansas City might be great, but that it was hardly civilised. "Aw, hell! you don't know what you are talking about. Kansas City packs more hogs than Chicago!"

And Kansas City culture was checked off—so many feet of painted canvas in private houses, so many square feet in art galleries, so many miles of boulevards, so many acres of parks, more students in its art schools in proportion to its age, its public school system talked about in Berlin!

Flodden suggested that Berlin wasn't a bad place. Hordern glared at him. "It's just fellers like you," he exclaimed, "that ain't satisfied to live in this country. If you like Berlin so well, why in hell don't you go there? How would *you* like to see *your* wife hitched up with a cow to a plough? Damn nice country where they have to use dogs for horses!"

Had Mr. Hordern been in Berlin? He fairly exploded! "I've been in Berlin seven times! I always have the best suite at the Brinkerhof! Damn scoundrels, too. Rob a feller right and left. Tickled to death when they can hang up a sign that says they have a bathroom in the house! They don't know nothing about plumbing. Why, if us Americans could send a million plumbers over there a year, we might make that town half-way decent."

"But think of . . ." That was as far as Flodden got.

"Don'tchou tell me about their clean streets and scientific museums, and libraries and art galleries. We could have 'em too if we wanted to tax people to death and grind the noses of the poor. Look at the Royal Family of England. Why, do you know . . ." He gave us the exact figures. It appeared the Royal Family costs more than the American Congress.

"Perhaps it is worth more?"

"Nice empire, that! Oh, I'd like to have John Bull's job for a month. I'd make an empire out o' it! Why, do you know we can ship beef from Kansas City to Liverpool cheaper than they can haul it from Liverpool to London? What can you expect of a country with dinky little, two-fer-a-nickel freight cars? I tell you there ain't a country in Europe I don't know." And he gave us the statistics of all his travels—right off the bat. So many nights in Rome. So many miles on the Grand Canal. So many leagues by private coach through the Alps. So many pictures in the National Gallery—cost of each and possible profit if put on the auction block to-day. He reeked with facts. Arranged them in pairs. The contents of the Louvre is more than counterbalanced by the output of the stockyards. And so on down through the list.

I cultivated Flodden. He was refreshing. He was an awful pessimist, but behind that was a relentless criticism, which to anybody but an optimist would have seemed destructive. To me it was a stimulant. I was amazed at his versatility—scarcely less striking than his whims.

We were passing through the lounge one morning. A state-ly old dowager was toying with a fan. Flodden got a glance at it. He brought himself up with a sudden stop, made the old lady a profound bow and said, "I beg your pardon, madam, but may I look at your fan? I am an admirer of fans. Yours seems to be very . . ."

Only in Alexandra's drawing-room had I seen a courtesy of

that kind. He must have picked it up abroad. That and his words made the proper impression.

The dowager smiled graciously and handed over the fan. Flodden examined it carefully and after a few moments restored it to her hands. And they began to talk fans. This was a rare one, painted for the wife of Don Juan of Austria by a famous Spanish artist. Flodden seemed to know as much about fans as I did about bones.

The next thing I knew they were discussing miniatures, then lace. Decided that Velasquez is first of all painters, and that the Fine Arts Gallery at the Chicago World's Fair was the handsomest building since the Parthenon.

We had seated ourselves at the old lady's invitation. But I felt out of place in that conversation—as though I had on spurs and a *poncho*. I knew that Alexandra could hold her own with them. And I knew that Alexandra could talk about these things and let me in. But I couldn't even get my nose under their tent. I just sat outside to take the tickets, as it were.

A few moments later a young woman bore down upon us—a regal young person, as the daughter of a dowager should be. We were presented. She shook hands graciously. Flodden's interest suddenly collapsed. He suggested that we retire. I was disgusted. Just when an attractive young lady had arrived with whom I might have had a few words.

"Bah!" he exclaimed, "did you notice that woman's hands?"

"The *young* woman's?"

"Yes. Clammy! Can't bear people with clammy hands. Makes me sick."

Flodden *was* a queer mixture.

Suddenly, apropos of nothing at all, he began a tirade against women, stripped them to the bone, divested them of every grace and all charm. Could he have had a mother? Why, a man that would talk like that must be the spawn of an imp of Satan. He mentioned Mrs. Flodden.

"Your mother?"

"No! My wife!" Viciously. I wondered what sort of woman Mrs. Flodden might be.

Hordern's dislike of Flodden increased daily. Flodden either ignored or else scoffed at many of Hordern's arguments and much of his oratory. Hordern blew many iridescent soap-bubbles—to be rewarded with a flip of soap in his eye. Flodden's stinger too often found the vulnerable point of his argument. You can't prick a bubble and keep it. So Hordern leaned more and more heavily on me. I became the wedding guest of this Ancient Mariner.

I learned a great deal about America in one week. Somehow I couldn't get excited about it. Flodden seemed to approve of my lack of enthusiasm.

He took me off in a corner of the salon one afternoon and gave me a three minutes' lecture on the ephemeral nature of things. He argued that the significance of a thing is not in the thing itself, but where it came from and where it is going. Cincinnati once packed more hogs than Chicago. Boston was once the biggest city in America. Salem was once America's greatest port. America was once Puritan and Anglo-Saxon. The time is coming when New York will be the most cosmopolitan city in the world, the most vicious and the most brutal, the richest and the most beautiful. Some people in New York call immigrants scum and sewage, but some day most New Yorkers will be calling them brothers and fathers.

I have reason to remember this talk. It was just here that a man behind us in a dark corner—we had thought we were alone—broke out with: "Well, what of it? Don't you say that nothing lasts? Some say America will become Catholic and that the Pope will emigrate. What are *you* going to do about it, Mr. Low?"

At the very first word I thought the voice seemed familiar. Now I knew. . . . Good Lord! It was Paul Lanfiere! I had been on this boat five days and had not seen him! I gripped myself and faced the speaker squarely. Again I

breathed: "Good Lord!" but of infinite relief. It was *not* Paul Lanfiere. I had never seen the man before.

He had addressed me. In a limp voice I managed to stammer: "Me? Why, I don't know that *I* am going to do anything about it."

I wanted to pick that man up and fling him overboard. Damn him—what did he mean—butting into our conversation—and nearly scaring me to death! The smoke-room seemed close. I was choked. Flodden, noticing my discomfort, proposed a walk, and I grabbed at the chance.

Outside. "What's the matter with you?" he asked. "Who is that man? Do you know him?" I told him I thought for a moment it was Paul Lanfiere.

"What! Paul Lanfiere?" And he whistled to himself softly. "Do you know that unmitigated scoundrel, brute wielder of vast power? Good God! man, Paul Lanfiere is one of the most powerful men in America! He can break a President as easily as I can do this!" And he spat overboard. "How do you happen to know that fiend? Nero was a puppet, the prey of his favourite courtesans. Lanfiere pulls the strings that control millions of puppets. And you and I, poor undancing worms that we are, pay the piper."

I was indeed astonished. I had supposed I knew something about Lanfiere. But this was worse. Flodden was warming to his task.

"Lanfiere is the most unscrupulous self-centred pervert of erudition I've heard of. He's the brain of American greed. He's the Devil's advocate—the Power's spokesman, leader, God." And he chuckled fiendishly.

"Liverpool Sunday night, gentlemen, if this weather keeps up." It was the Captain. A genial soul for a Britisher.

"Ever stop to think," said Flodden, after the Captain had passed out of hearing, "of your handicap when you meet an Englishman? You know what I mean."

Frankly, I did not know what he meant, but I thought that it would disconcert him to admit it, so I "Um-md."

"Yes," he went on, "they've got it on us. The Britisher always has back there some place in that noddle of his a sub-consciousness which tells him that he is a member of the greatest, the mightiest, and the richest empire the world has ever known, that their little island has given birth to a language which dominates the commercial world, that his brothers, sons, and kindred actually dominate half the earth. A sub-consciousness which is backed by warships!

"Ever stop to think what that means! Why, look here, Low, do you know that the commonest Italian sewer-digger in New York City despises you as completely as he pities you? You are only a fortunate upstart. He? O! he is a Roman! Conscious of three thousand years of history. He was monarch of the earth once. And he dreams of a day when he will regain that supremacy.

"Consider your Chinese laundryman. You're an uncouth savage child in his eyes. He has as little respect for you as has the eagle for the crag on which it nests. He has a history behind him. His time-sense checks off days in an almanac of four thousand years. Four centuries end to end have witnessed all of American history! That Chinaman can trace his ancestry back through more generations than there are decades in American history. Confucius' descendants live to-day in the ninety-second generation!"

"Well," I replied, "haven't we got something?"

"Certainly. You know you were born on a farm twenty, forty, sixty years ago; that your grandfather crossed the mountains; that somebody, perhaps in a vague dim way related to you, fought a war a few years ago against a bandbox full of soldiers who weren't even fighting for the flag they marched under."

"But that isn't Horder's subconsciousness."

"No. He hasn't any. He is all in the foreground. He just knows that he is Horder and that he can lick the earth."

"Well, he can, can't he?"

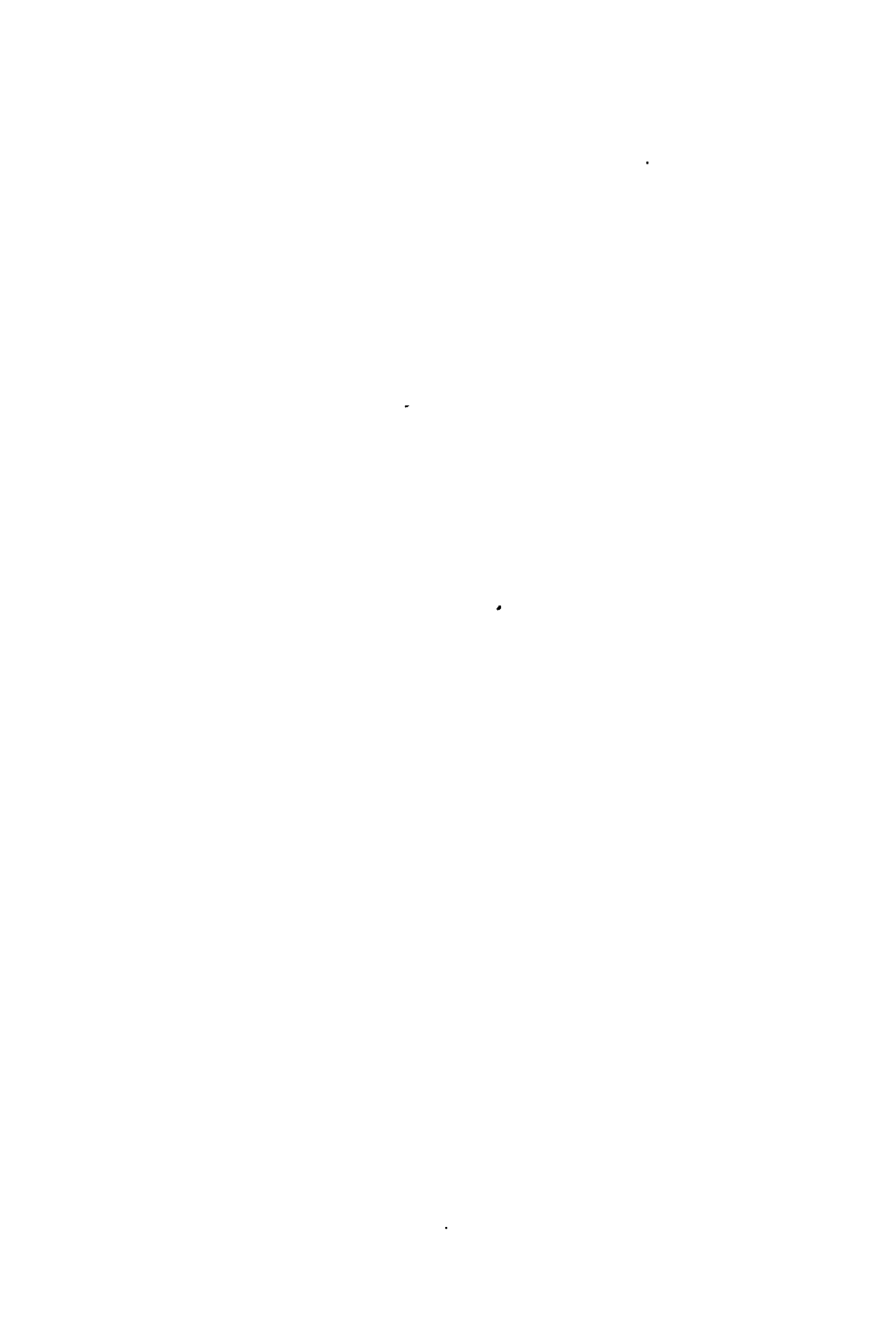
"He can, *if* he can. But he can't *because* he says he can."
The wind got a little chilly. It was time to go to bed.

Because of fog we had passed Queenstown by. In the morning we were off the Mersey. All my life I had yearned for a first glimpse of Merry Old England. A life-long dream to be realised! And up there in London only a few hours away was . . . Alexandra!

With my fellow passengers I was squeezed in tight against the rail—ininitely happy.

The changing panorama held me spellbound. But down beneath all this was that wilder emotion which told me that London . . . Alexandra?

Only a few hours more?



PART THREE: ALEXANDRA

PART THREE: ALEXANDRA

CHAPTER XXI

THE TALE OF TWO CITIES

A SHIFTING life and a busy one mine has been—a series of surprises and of things unexpected. There are times when I feel that I get more than I deserve. Some of my friends call me lucky, and, as a rule, I grant the impeachment. Life is luck. In some lives most of it is bad luck. I suppose I should say most of mine has been good; I mean luck, of course. I know that many will think it bad; I mean my life, of course. If I must pay that for my frankness, it is worth the price—though often the reward. . . . There hasn't been any reward. I merely understand myself better.

The four days I spent in London with Alexandra. . . . I won't say they constituted a crisis in my life. I should not like to venture to pick out a crisis in mine. There have been too many of them.

I shall not tell you about that Saturday night in London. Only that Alexandra met me at Charing Cross Station, that we drove to her apartment, dressed, dined, talked till midnight, supped at the Savoy; that . . . There are intimacies in life so beautiful, so transcendent, that sharing them, even with friends, cannot add to the intensity or heighten the lustre of their memory. There are things so sacred that one can't speak of them! We do not lay bare the very soul of our happiness.

After that Saturday night I looked with new eyes at the world. All else before paled as does the Morning Star with

the rising of the sun. Only more quickly. Mine was a holy intoxication. Life suddenly became delicate, exquisite, ecstatic. A new potentiality was mine and all my conceptions were oriented anew. I was Atlas and could carry the earth. The earth itself was suffused with glory whose rays seemed focussed on me to give me this—the most intense experience, the supreme pleasure of my life.

Alexandra meant all that to me.

Fashioned after our heart's desire were those four days! A *life* of joy in four days! I can recall every minute of it all. And have, over and over again—amid the snows of New Zealand's mountains, under the palms of the seashore in Tahiti, on the coral coast of Malabar, in the gorges of the Yangtze, in the gloom of the Congo forest, at sea under the stars—wherever I've gone, wherever I've been, when I was poor, when I was rich—I have called those days back—and lived them over again, and again, and again.

And I had thought that I knew love!

The Old Man once said: "Every normal man has the mating impulse, but not every one has the capacity to love."

I know there are those who deny love—and they will not understand. I am sorry for them. What has life meant for them? Only illusion. And they have missed the one, the great illusion! I am sorry for them.

Why, I remember every moment of that journey to London—from Liverpool. It seemed interminable.

Then, too, I wasn't certain that I should find Alexandra there. She had said "some one." But I could not—I did not doubt her. I was sure of her. But it didn't seem possible—it couldn't be true. There must be some mistake. Some flaw in my interpretation.

The chimney-pots of London. . . . Miles and endless miles of red brick houses. . . . Would we ever arrive? And when at last we swung into the great, gloomy train-shed

—how my heart pounded! My breath seemed to have deserted me entirely!

I was the first to descend from the train. Only porters in sight. But the carriages emptied rapidly and by the time I got to the gates there was a jam and a confusion of trunks, boxes, porters, cabbies, travellers and visitors. But no Alexandra!

But then she would hardly come to the station—I consoled myself. To avoid the worst of the jam I told my porter to take the gate at the extreme left. This brought me out rather behind the crowd. Suddenly my heart went *thump!* Just that way. There, with her back to me, not ten feet away, was Alexandra. I could have recognised that little body among a million.

She had not seen me. In three strides I was behind her—my hands tight over her ears. She gave a gasp—half sob, half cry—and shook herself free and faced me, her eyes blazing, her lips parted, her cheeks as crimson as her ermine-faced crimson cloak. She put out her two hands—and thus we stood—I caught her up and kissed her.

Shall I ever forget that moment? It was our first kiss. No barrier that she might erect could keep me from her now. I had tasted blood. I was Young Low—the man. And she—she was *the* woman. All other differences were swept away. And she knew it as well as I. She was still a Goddess—but I was her master. The moment that our lips met all that was settled irrevocably.

It simply could not be true.

“Is it all a dream, best beloved? Am I reading the impossible, made plausible by a skilful writer of romance? I don’t deserve this. I have not won the right to the smile of Heaven.”

“But are you sure of my nativity?”

“From Hell then! You are Circe, I know that. But what worries me is the fear that I may wake up.”

“You will.”

"And find myself back in Lanyon?"

"Yes."

"Then I won't."

But just the same I could not rid myself of a haunting fear that somehow I should pay for all this.

Pay? Pay is a strange word—it may mean so much, or so little.

Have you ever, as a child, dreamed of finding yourself in the cave of the Island of Monte Cristo? Suddenly you are rich. The power to conquer, to do, is heaped upon you. The dream itself is real enough. Yet all the while your subconscious is struggling to tell the conscious mind that it is a dream. That's the way I felt.

But it *was* true. Nothing in all my life had been so true. Hadn't I held this woman in my arms? Wasn't she real flesh and blood?

It was our last night in London—we were to leave for Paris the following morning. We were in front of an open fire, just big enough and cheerful enough to let us forget the yellow fog and sharp cold outside. Alexandra was a wee bit weary, as she put it, though we had made no attempt to *do* London, and I was holding her as I would a child. I shouldn't have asked the question, for she just wanted to rest. But I did. I was just that young and that foolish. I hadn't learned to let well enough alone and make the most of it. I was still addicted to the habit of trying to square everything to my little rule of conduct.

I realised then that I was an intellectual sapling by the side of Garvin and Alexandra—giants both. But I did not realise it well enough not to try to discount the discrepancy—nor did I make due allowance for the *human* element in both these masters of my early life. I did learn that Alexandra was a human being—but I never quite outgrew the attitude forced

on me by the character of my previous experience, that she was more than human.

Alexandra was normal. No normal woman wants to be worshipped. Had I known that then I would have better understood her. Instead, I asked her how it was that I was so happy.

"But, *mon ami*, am I not happy, too?"

I hoped she was—she deserved it. But I felt I was unworthy of all that had come to me. Alexandra held that it was not a question of deserving, but rather taking happiness when it comes. Every one deserves happiness, she maintained. Each one gets it, according to one's need.

I suspect she meant capacity. Had my capacity for happiness been enlarged by the artificial character of my early life? Possibly. I was not convinced by what society said to me. And when I was passing through the great crisis of my life, when I was entering manhood, when I really needed a friend, when nature was most insistent that I find some one to whom I might unburden myself—I found only misunderstanding. I was forced back into myself to be tortured by remorse for my natural indiscretions.

The world asks the impossible of young men and young women, and then, knowing they have not achieved it, lets them turn to harpies who prey upon their fears and imagination, or permits them to gnaw at the very vitals of their soul in secret remorse and loss of will.

Our imagination was distorted, our vision obscured, and our ideals—well, boys do have ideals, of course, but when they get out in life and find them shadows, they either cling to them blindly, or revolt—to prey on women whom their demands bring down to their level.

Nature, greatest of breeders, asks only that we love. A young man not in love is apt to be cynical and turn to sophistry or religion.

Try as I would I felt I did not deserve this happiness. I know now how much I owe to Alexandra, who found me struggling in a maze of mental inconsistencies and was big enough to bring me out into the open where I could see light. Without her . . . My God! What *would* my life have been without her!

It was maddening to think I might lose her. Her assurance was characteristic.

"As long as we are happy together, dear, as long as our love nourishes each other's natural needs and yearnings, as long as I am sure I am not marring your life. I realise that I am selfish. . . ."

That was more than I could stand. Alexandra could not do a selfish thing. Mar my life! I protested that I had nothing to mar, that she must know it. And as for her being selfish. . . .

"But," she protested, "I am selfish. Every woman must be—or she is not a whole woman. I want to be loved, I tell you—to be loved. Don't you realise, *mon ami*, that for a woman to be loved is second only to existence itself? When one loves blindly it is more than life itself."

With half closed eyes and a curious expression she looked at me a minute and said: "Do you know, lover of mine, anything of the struggle that went on in me before I sent for you? Didn't you ever guess—back in the Boston days—how much I wanted to defy the conventions?"

I marvelled at her frankness and naturally was curious to know why she . . .

"Well, I tried to convince myself that my motive was . . . I was always afraid—so I put it to myself—that the want of you would overcome the will to do only that which should be helpful to you. You notice I say that I *tried* to convince myself that it was. You see," she went on, "wanting and willing, as you have taught me, may be two very different things. It was part of my very soul and body to want you. It was my

will to do you no harm. The want was born in me. The will was part of my acquired disposition. But I am not unlike other women. I have looked too deeply into my soul to be deceived. I want you, not because I love *you*, but because I love myself. I can gratify my love of self in your presence; I can be happy."

"And are you happy?" I asked her.

"Very."

"What is happiness, Alexandra?"

"What is truth?" said jesting Pilate, 'and would not stay the answer.' There are so many kinds of happiness, and each knows it in his own way and according to the size of the hole in the wall through which he views life. With you I can be supremely happy because I forget all of life's pains. Don't you find that tears and laughter are your best sign posts on the way through life? I do. One seems to lead to well-being, the other to . . . Happiness holds out the promise of success."

"I'm happy. But Father wouldn't find success in this."

"Maybe he is right. Happiness is like sunshine. It may carry in it the seed of disaster when it is too intense."

"But how are we to know?"

"Trust your judgment. Oh, *mon ami*, I love myself through you. With you I am all that I would wish. You gave me that which was so long denied me. But I am not utterly abandoned in my selfishness. For ten years young men came to my house and left as they came."

"Why was I the favoured one?"

"The eternal question, as old as love. Love is so curious! We are always wondering why *we* are the recipient. Man says to maid and maid says to man: 'Why do you love me? Meaning, of course, 'Why, of all the world's creatures with whom you have come in contact, have you picked me and me alone to be the object of this wondrous thing? Why do you single me out from the flock?' "

Do not misunderstand me. I am not certain that I can make myself plain. I was no Uriah Heep—it was no part of my nature to be humble. But hang it all, from Lanyon's impossible and unnatural point of view, I had lived a worm's life. There had been the affair of Marie. And here I was, ostensibly tutor to two children, but in reality the lover of a married woman—and inordinately proud of it. I had done so many of the things that "lead down to Hell!" My teaching was all to the effect I should be held to account for them. Why shouldn't I pay the price?

I did not know that mine had simply been the normal experience—seemingly inharmonious because at variance with an abnormal ideal.

From the point of view of Lanyon, if Lanyon knew, I was a worm. Deep within me I had a notion that perhaps Lanyon and all the admonitions of my early life were the perverts—that I was the normal, the natural man. And so I say of humbleness I had none. But I certainly did not have the courage of my convictions.

But why had Alexandra Lanfiere chosen me? I asked her again.

"Why does the bee select the flower he kisses? Or the humming bird that one nectar cup from out the multitude? I don't know. I suppose there are no two beings alike in the whole world. We choose. We mate. I can catalogue your features and describe the traits of the object of my love. But that hardly tells the story. No part of me singled you out. It was *all* of me. It must be intuition—or chance, as the thunderbolt selects the object it will destroy. The shaft flies through space. It strikes. Who guides it? What guides it? Sometimes the course of love's shaft is straight, swift, and sudden. It may dally along the way for years before it strikes. Love is subtle, my dear—full of moods and whims."

"And as delicate as a silken web?" I asked.

"And as strong. Do you think it well to dissect it? Per-

haps it will not spoil you if I tell you what there was in you that appealed to me the first night I met you. As I looked at you it seemed that you were capable of anything. You were fine, clean-cut, well-set-up. You didn't bulge out at places. There was nothing fussy about you. You were strong—to swing an axe; gentle—to handle lace; tender—to fondle a child—or . . .”

“But why then didn't you let me come to you in Boston?”

“I might—if you had worshipped me less and loved me more.”

Again I marvelled at her frankness.

“And you can draw me out. I can laugh with you. I am not afraid of you. Your conventions are habits formed in a well ordered home, founded on mutual esteem and kindness—*noblesse oblige*.”

I'm not a fidgety traveller. I don't go to the station the night before to catch a morning train. But when there came a rap at our door to say that the carriage was ready, I was surprised that the morning hour had gone so swiftly. I had lost time sense. Ordinarily I should have been at the station long ago, eager to set out on this journey to a new land, to the World's Capital of art and fashion and allure. But Alexandra was enough. In the joy of her presence I lost myself. Values either became unreal, or took on quite new meanings.

At Victoria Station we left the alternating fog and sunshine of London and hurried across beautiful South England to the chalk cliffs of Dover at a speed I had never experienced at home. I could now take in some of the things I was seeing. From Liverpool to London I had been too impatient. I hadn't seen anything. I had to get to Alexandra first.

But now I had Alexandra's eyes to help me. They discovered beauty for me on every side. Every town we rumbled through had a significance, had played a part in the history of our Old Home.

We could sense the confusion at Dover, but it did not touch

us. Confusion had no part in this journey. We were passed on and deposited gently and nicely in a suite of cabins.

"There!" said Alexander, with just a little sigh of relief. "Isn't it good to be back in the land of real service? Every American thinks he can do everything better than anybody else. We have no servants at home. Over here service is an honourable occupation. In America, social strata lies in horizontal layers. The men at the bottom struggle toward the top."

"But," I protested, "that's a fine thing. Is it not quite proper that the man who opens the door to-day should aspire to have you open his door to-morrow?"

"Yes, the aspiration is all right if it doesn't interfere with his opening the door for you. He is so ambitious that he is constantly dissatisfied with the work in hand. He anticipates his entrance into a higher stratum, and that makes him discontented with his present lot, and neglectful of his duties."

"But some do rise," I maintained.

"Of course some do. Some railroad presidents began by laying ties. But they laid ties as though life depended upon it. Industry and accuracy marked each step of their advance. There are merchant princes who started out with a broom in one hand and a sprinkler in the other—but they were real sweepers while they were at it. And they are the exception.

"Restlessness mars so many lives, because success is measured by wealth rather than by the quality of the work performed and the joy of doing it. Isn't that success? Don't you think it possible to achieve success on a stool in an office, or in a bank?

"In Europe the strata are up and down. A servant feels worthy of his hire and strives to become the best servant. Our school teachers, labourers, and artisans put their strength and intelligence into the work in hand. Success for each is measured by the height attained in this or that stratum."

"But, after all," I protested, "isn't the advantage ours?"

"Do you think so? It seems to me it isn't—either in the system or the way it works out. Certainly not in the way it

works out. And whatever of advantage the system itself may have is temporary."

I did not quite understand what she meant. She held that America must become Europeanised—just as Europe must become Americanised. It is inevitable. Each year the stream of influence mounts higher and barriers to it are swept away. America is rapidly settling down to a caste system. But the castes have not reached the formal stage. It is easier to break over them than it is in India. But each year finds it more and more difficult. Each year the line is drawn a little tighter.

I hadn't thought of that before. "And what will it all come to, Alexandra?"

"Oh, *mon ami*, I am not wise. I don't see all. You men deny us the right to use our intelligence in such matters. Your grandfathers did much better by us. You pet us, spoil us, ruin us. You make us fat, cunning, indolent. Once you let us knit your socks and weave your linen. And at night we sang to you. Now you are scarcely willing to let us entertain you. We have become manikins on which to advertise your success, and afford your eyes a spectacle of cruder than Oriental barbarism. You slave for us, rob banks, and put up freight rates and the price of coal, in order to indulge the whims we inevitably develop. And then you amuse yourselves in clubs or worse. We can't talk to you any more. Your vocabulary is strange to us. You have shut us out of your life, reduced companionship between the sexes to a matter of commerce and intercourse devoid of love or passion. Yet you have the stupidity to say that you do not understand us. Now don't you ever be so foolish as to say you don't understand me. I am a human being—I want to be loved."

"*Voyez!* Is that France?"

"Yes, and that is the lighthouse of Calais."

Time to get our things together. I got up. Alexandra pulled me down by my sleeve. "Sit down, dear, you don't

have to get the 7.27 train for Boston. This is France, Europe, the Old Country. Let us forget that we are Americans."

Evidently Alexandra saw something in my face.

"Don't be silly, dear. Of course you will never forget you are an American, or cease to be foolish of your American birthright. But we're in France now. Let's see what is here. Let us put aside our honestly-come-by prejudices. Perhaps you can learn to respect, even to love, France. We can't begin to enjoy until we learn to live in the present—forgetting to measure it with the past."

I capitulated. In due time we were spinning through that altogether lovely landscape between Calais and Paris. We were comfortable, and fed, and looked after, and left alone; and were happy. Alexandra's Swiss maid was like a Chinese servant, always invisible, except when you wanted her, and then she was already at her task.

A compartment had been reserved for us. It was like magic. Always. A carriage was always at hand when we wanted it; apartments were always reserved, the rooms heated; if it was morning, the breakfast was ready; if afternoon, tea seemed to come at just the right moment. Bills seemed always to have been paid in advance—it was as if we were the guests of the country through which we were travelling, as if the hotels were our hosts. And yet I could never seem to catch Alexandra in the act of giving a direction or an order. To ask her how she managed would seem like asking a fairy to show her wings, or a magician to explain his tricks. But some weeks later an especially significant thing happened and I could restrain my curiosity no longer. We had just entered the Italian customs frontier. I had heard about annoyance here. We had a quantity of baggage, for we were a family of five, with the maid, and were equipped for a journey of some months. When the train stopped, I started to leave the carriage.

"Where to, *mon ami*?"

"Business of Customs, Beloved."

"Come, sit down. We will have tea in a moment. The customs is arranged."

Was there ever such a woman since time began! Her very presence made life a thing of rapture. As for the annoyances of life—well, they couldn't exist where she was.

"Look here," I demanded, "are you a witch?" I knew she was, but I meant another kind of witch. "Is your open-sesame good in Italy, too?"

"Don't forget, my dear, that I am Mrs. Lanfiere. As long as I bear that name Paul Lanfiere's European agents will see to it that I travel comfortably. It is the power of the press. The first American newspaper is a power in every court of Europe. No," she smiled, "we shall not be bothered with the gendarmes of the Italian frontier."

Those eyes could bewitch—or bestow a benediction.

For a long time we abandoned ourselves to the luxury of gentle motion. Then all of a sudden Alexandra said, "May I say one thing more? Let's be ourselves—our whole selves. We're in a land of understanding. People over here know how to mind their own business. We are neither sinners nor criminals. Let us think of ourselves as runaway lovers, if you please. But the world here will take us for what we seem. It will let us alone, because it will be busy with its own affairs."

In my stupid ignorance I wondered if that meant an excess of immorality in Europe. I came to know that sex crimes are less common in Europe than in America, as are crimes of all sorts. The French especially are a law-abiding people, self-respecting and careful of the rights of others. French society is not particularly concerned about private morals of individuals. In Europe news is political rather than social.

"And so, my dear," said Alexandra, as her little body settled down against mine, "we have our work to do and each of us has our own very special work. Meanwhile, let's put aside our fears and be happy. Let me help you see Europe. Study it, drink it in, and when you go home, some day, you will be

valuable to your country and infinitely more interesting to yourself. If you will know Europe you will be better able to understand your own country, the momentous changes going on in its population, and the meaning of its mental and physical unrest. Why, do you know, dear, it seems to me there's more mental unrest in America than in any country of Europe. I sometimes fear that the land you've just left is on the eve of a mental revolution which will cause its people to question the very foundation of their government!"

America seemed very far away, I urged.

"Quite right. And now, lover mine, hold me. I just want to be loved to sleep, and when you see the grey heights of Montmartre, kiss my eyes open. Won't you, dear?"

I sang that little song of Father's about the red, ripe cherries and the grass all wet with dew.

Those days in Paris were very wonderful.

I had not yet got into the habit of thinking things over. I had youth's lack of time sense. Each day was lived as though it were eternity. No day was long enough.

Paris was very beautiful. I thought nothing could be better. I was still full of illusions and strong on imagination. Paris was still comparatively fresh. It still had something sacred about it. It had not yet sold lock, stock, and barrel, its very soul, to the stranger. It had not yet commercialised its family life. There were still cafés and restaurants and music halls unspoiled by greed for gain. Paris was beautiful in a professional way—not ugly in a business way, as later.

Alexandra was a sympathetic guide, mentor, and friend. The children's eager curiosity and naïve interest, and their wholesome delight in things, were inspiring. We were a happy little family, living for the day, sufficient unto ourselves.

Now and then Alexandra would say, "Come, my dear, this shall be *our* day." And like the lovers we were we two would wander off alone to Fontainebleau, to St. Germain, to St.

Denis, to Chantilly. We came to love Barbizon especially. The setting sun often found us sitting there, unconscious of the hours that had slipped by while we were talking—just Alexandra and I.

And I drank deep from that fountain of love and frankness and human understanding.

That was life. And that is what we are always saying to ourselves. Each new experience opens up another room of understanding—and “this is life,” we say to ourselves.

“But it is not life to lose one’s ideals,” Alexandra once said. “The road of life forks, by and by. One leads to the Sargasso Sea of nothing-worth-whileness, a sea that is stagnant, hopeless, futile, because when we come at last to see this world as it perhaps is, it means knowing that we are doomed to decadence, lifelessness, inertness. Isn’t it so? Doesn’t that view of life force us to conclude that but one thing remains—to attain perfection and then commit suicide? Better no philosophy at all than this.”

I could agree to that, and added: “‘Where ignorance is bliss, ’tis folly . . .’”

A little shadow of unhappiness flitted across Alexandra’s face.

“It’s all right, dear. You couldn’t help it. Old sayings may be as bad as statistics—they seem to prove almost anything. They seem to ring true like good money. But many counterfeits are passed on from one generation to another—because they’re believed to be pure gold. Ignorance is never bliss, and knowledge isn’t necessarily wisdom. Suppose we *can* take a stand out on a star, with all time past and to come, and look with pity upon this little world of ours. We are not out there—we are here. This is our home. Let’s take the other fork of the road—to the fertile plains of life and on that road let us say, ‘Ours is a human and finite vision. The plain seems eternal and it is certainly as broad as human destiny. Let’s live to the full, and love.’”

There were times when it seemed that I could go on listening to this woman to the very end of my life. Her understanding enabled her to encompass with her love everything. I clung to her and sought her, thinking if I might pluck her—flower, stem and all—I should know all, and love all—all men and all life and all love, and God!

Alexandra seemed to hold within her delicate, strong body the summation of all the heroines my youthful imagination had ever pictured. She was as radiant as the dawn, as dazzling as Elpore with the Morning Star upon her brow. She was Arethusa, Little Nell, Aurora Leigh, Giaconda, Amelia, Helen of Troy, Griselda—all, all in one—the fragrant essence of the whole world of women of all time.

I more than loved her. You see, I could never put away the feeling that, fine and splendid as she was, she was a divinity just a little fallen. I could never quite forgive her for forgiving herself. I couldn't quite get away from the notion Lanyon had bred in me that love had in it something inherently base. Such an idea rarely rose to the surface of my consciousness, but it was there, in my secret thoughts, a tiny thing—but it could hurt. I could not help saying to myself—at rarer and rarer intervals—"What would Lanyon think? What *would* Mother say? What would Father do?" But they couldn't know—if they could, they *could* not condemn.

My complete confidence in Alexandra, my unbounded respect for her, always saved the day for me. The thought of her would bring me back to the world of reality and beauty—and Lanyon and its narrow ideas about life would recede and seem of little importance.

So our relationship came to have a spiritual quality also. I loved her. And I adored her.

I thought I was happy in Paris because it was Paris. But as I think about it now, I'm sure that Paris had little to do with it. Alexandra's personality made the charm of it all. Memories of days in the sunshine, wandering along the

Champs Élysées, of long rambles through the Louvre, of idle hours at the Café de la Paix reviewing selected samples of the human race! The opera always seemed to be fulfilling things dreamed of formlessly in childhood. I remember so well the quiet dignity of the Place Vendôme and its superb bronze column. How many times from the summit of the arch in the Place de l'Etoile we watched the sun set and the colour fade in the west while myriads of lights popped out around and below us. Often little pre-arranged meetings brought us together, as if by chance at this or that market, where we lost ourselves in the simple life of simple folk. I loved the gaudy shops on the rue de Rivoli. I loved to play hide-and-seek with the children in the Garden of the Luxembourg. All these things—new, romantic, magic—I absorbed greedily. But the physical appearance of Paris never got into me as London had, while Alexandra and I rode for hours on top of a bus, playing “just in from the country.”

CHAPTER XXII

AT TAORMINA

EARLY spring saw us starting south. It was a perfect day—well on in February. We were walking in the Luxembourg gardens. Alexandra seemed in an unusual mood—a bit restless. She sniffed the air as though testing it. Suddenly she exclaimed, "Come, the almonds will blossom soon. It's time to look after our nest." There was a light in her eyes that I'd never seen before. "It's time to fly south. Spring is coming up from across the sea and the sands. My restless soul has had enough of the exotics of Parisian life. I want to be a child again. It's time to play."

Time to play!

I think I shall not try to set down much about that long ride, to me all too short, from Paris to Taormina. Dear old earth holds few more entrancing journeys. I left Paris with a bit of a pang—trustful as I was of Alexandra's judgment, I feared her passion for Taormina might be the one thing which I could not share with her. Paris had been so satisfying, so complete, so perfect.

Once outside the city my regrets were swallowed up by my eagerness to push further into the world.

We went straight through to Naples, for, Alexandra said, "There's plenty of time, and we shall come to understand and love Rome—and Tivoli, and Lake Nemi—and . . . Oh—all the blessed old places of Italy."

That all came to pass; but now these places went by as names on the page of a time-table, while the train rumbled on.

We slipped out of Naples at night, with a glow from Vesu-

vius paling the lights that flickered and went out one by one round that great half-moon bay.

Next morning we were in Messina. An hour later the train dropped us at a station by the sea. A carriage bearing Alexandra's coat of arms carried us back and forth up the face of a wall of stone to Taormina, perhaps the most beautiful spot in all the world.

Villa Ionica! A mass of vine-covered stone set in a blaze of flowers was *our* home for fifteen blissful weeks! How we children—all four of us—clapped our hands and shouted for joy, as we piled out of the carriage and set our feet on the clean white gravel which led up to the long wide veranda shut in by *bougainvillea*! On that veranda one of the greatest of Russians had written one of the great modern novels; there the great Polish musician had composed his masterpiece! For three generations that villa had belonged to Alexandra's family.

Villa Ionica! Now I knew why Alexandra's soul was tortured by Beacon Street, why she could leave Paris so gaily.

And this was to be our home for fifteen weeks! *Our* home! It couldn't be true. I could feel my face twitch with pent-up emotion. Alexandra must have noticed it. She turned the children over to their maid, then we started off down a path to the left through a maze of flowering shrubbery to a vine-covered pavilion in a far corner of the garden. Before I knew it we stood at the edge of a precipice which dropped straight below us two thousand feet—a waist-high stone wall shut us in. The Ionian Sea below—sapphire blue in the morning sun!

"And now, Young Low, lover of mine, don't you ever again dare suggest that I have left anything behind!"

It *was* that way. Villa Ionica was a world in itself. In the shade of that pavilion there could be nothing more to be desired.

"Alexandra, you are . . ."

"A woman, stupid man, a woman, I tell you."

"And I love you."

"Now you are talking sense."

"Then take that," and I smothered her—till she broke away like a fawn for the house.

Our life in Sicily had begun.

Time again took on a new meaning for me—became something real and definite. It had an existence apart from thought or the printed page. Twenty-six hundred years ago men lived. Up there in that Greek theatre, where immortal Æschylus conducted a performance of the greatest tragedy conceived by man, was the proof—I could put my hands on it.

In Paris I had had many happy hours, many whole days with Paul and Pauline. I found them the source of many of the most satisfying moments of my life. Surely they were having their best years. Even a pessimist must be tinged with optimism in the presence of such children! I wonder what seed of happiness or wisdom Lu Sharpe or Jim Stone could sow in that psychic soil! Perhaps Paul and Pauline could have humanised them! I wonder.

Young Low, the tutor, became Young Low, the pupil. You see, Paul and Pauline hadn't learned thoughts or deeds beyond their years. Having no need to hide, they never hid; no incentive to deceive, they never lied. They had learned that tears have no value except as relief for grief. They were not precocious hypocrites. They were happy.

This thing got into me. Why had I learned so many things I shouldn't have known? Why had doors been slammed in the face of my naturally frank and open disposition until I developed the cunning of a fox? Why had I had held before me unattainable ideals, impossible hopes, false gods? Why had I been fed on sentimentality and illusion that it would take a lifetime to counteract?

These two children wanted to *know*. They were human interrogation marks. Now and then, of course, they would

want to investigate the bottom of a muddy well, but they were always quite content with their mother's reply: "Your little eyes are not big enough yet to see the bottom of that well. By and by they will be, and then I will help you." They trusted her because she had never deceived them. They could know anything that they had a right to know and the capacity to understand.

My own little deceits, that my training suggested as fit to be tried on children, slunk away abashed and ashamed.

Don't think they were geniuses or marvels. They had merely inherited sound minds and sound bodies. Their mother saw to it that their heritage was kept intact.

Paul and I had been reading Virgil up near the old theatre one afternoon. We sat in the shade so we could watch the sunlight play on the Tyrrhenian Sea. To the right of us was the opalescent Ionian Sea. Across the narrow straits of Messina were the dark forest-covered hills of Calabria. Behind us and about us—the *bougainvillea*-clad villas of a few of the earth's favoured. Beyond, deep dark valleys, lit up here and there by the pink and white of almond and orange orchards. Down the coast the black Cyclops, and dominating all, as it had through all the ages for weal or woe, mysterious Etna, a pillar of smoke by day, a flaming torch of destruction by night.

Paul and I were sitting side by side on the topmost seat of the amphitheatre. "Big Brother," he said, "why is Mother so happy? Why are you here? Why isn't Father here?"

"Little Brother of mine, and Brother of our Sister, it is all as you say, but I don't know why. There are so many things in this world about which I cannot explain the 'why,' Paul. I only know that they are so." And I told him the story of *Cædipus Tyrannus*.

"Yes," said Paul, meditatively. "That's the way some things are. Must it always be that way?"

How much did that little mind know? I would have given

a great deal to have looked into it to know just what was there.

"Too bad about these Greeks, wasn't it, Big Brother?"

Paul and I were up at the old theatre again. It had become a temple, a shrine, a retreat for us.

We had just settled down again after two weeks' journey round the island. We'd been high up among the hills to the pale grey stones of old Castrogiovani. We'd been to Trapani and had climbed Monte San Giuliano, where Æneas once was. At Selinunte we had gazed reverently at fallen giants, the greatest of all Greek temples. We'd been interested spectators at the marionette shows in Girgenti, and had watched the lights and shadows play hide-and-seek among the columns of the temples on the ridge below. And we had breathed deeply of the memories of Siracusa. Out there in that little bay I had tried to conjure up for the children the picture of the memorable battle in which Greece battered itself to pieces against Magna Græcia. We had gazed into the fountain of Arethusa, and revelled in the fragrance of the flowers and the sad mystery of those profound *latomias*, Cappuccini and Paradiso. Out there on the arid plain, behind the ancient city, we'd lost our way in the depth of the ancient fortress. And everywhere we'd seen evidence of the same futile struggles and the same fatal tragedies that are ours to-day.

But Paul, you see, had been wanting to get behind the struggle for existence among these ancient Greek cities.

"How do you mean, 'too bad,' Little Brother?"

"Shall I speak an oration, Big Brother?" He looked about to make certain we had the theatre to ourselves. Mother and Little Sister were having tea at the villa of an English friend. The tourists had all gone. We were alone.

"You will please me very much, Brother Paul, if you will speak me an oration." The lad descended to the stage of the theatre, first pointing out the seat where I, as favoured guest, should sit. I wondered what was to come. In the shade of a

mass of flowering vine, down in the *latomia*, a few days before, I had read "De Corona" to him and we had discussed the probable fate of Demosthenes. Was Paul going to give me a bit from the Crown, or a chorus from Euripides—or perhaps some fragment he had remembered of Aristophanes?

Paul started out in a quiet business-like way. Then hesitated a moment.

"What wouldst thou, O Paul, a toga?" A smile, a little smile of compassion.

"I am not a Greek; I am an American." It was evident that my interruption had embarrassed him. He stooped down, seeming to examine an inscription. Then he turned toward me and remarked: "Senator, I think I would have you sit there." I changed my position. His equanimity now restored, he began:

"Brotherly love is the most precious thing in the world. It is very rare. All these hundreds of years Sicily has been the home of men who wanted too much. They got it and were killed by men who wanted still more. That made many people hungry and unhappy.

"Must man go on forever piling up greedily more than he can use—only to make other men covetous? If so, then this will continue to be a sorry world and poor Sicily will be fought over, again and again.

"I wish I may never be rich—then I will cause no man to be jealous of me. I hope I may find work which will make me glad—then I can love it. If I were rich I could not be happy, for the rich are always in danger. I hope America will not grow too big or too rich, because then she would become a tyrant, and no tyrant ever lived long."

The world is safe in the hands of its youth!

To my applause was added that of lighter hands. Paul turned sharply to find his mother and his sister leaning against a column down at the side of the stage. They, too, had heard it all. I thought Paul might be annoyed, but there wasn't a trace of it.

"We didn't mean, Paul, to take you by surprise. But we knew you wouldn't mind and we didn't want to interrupt you."

"I'm glad you came, Mother. Only I wish I'd known you were here. Then I could have done it better."

Even a child could feel the inspiration of that woman.

Paul and his sister, arm in arm, wandered off to the villa. And Alexandra and I were left alone. As I started to arrange the cushions for her she snatched them from me. "Oh, you American men!"

I snatched them back. "Well, I *am* an American man—therefore I am going to act like one. I'm tutor to the Lanfiere children and—your slave—and *master*. Do you understand?"

"Now, I like you."

"Do you know what Paul asked me the other day?"

"Yes. I told him and Pauline all that I thought they could understand—and promised to tell them more sometime."

"What will you do with Paul, *Carita*?"

"What shall I do with Paul? Why, *mon ami*, it is *you* who are doing with Paul. He grows more like you day by day. He loves you and looks up to you—he thinks you're the most wonderful man in the world. He talked to me about you for a whole hour the other day. You are more than Big Brother to him. You are . . ."

I nodded—I knew what she meant

"His interest in things has increased amazingly these four months. He is more thoughtful, more observing, more considerate. I think you are helping Paul to realise what you know you missed as a boy. Is it not so? In Paul you are re-living your boyhood. With him . . ."

"I am the child—he, the man. Yes, dear, Paul is interpreting life for me. I am sure that from him—yes, and from Pauline, too . . . She is a dear, isn't she? Aren't you proud of them? Don't they make you feel that you would willingly suffer the tortures of the damned in order to keep them happy? I do. Those children get into me. They always did. Ah, my dear, just to have known those two children

would suffice to make my life livable! What I shall learn from them alone will make this year memorable in my life. They interpret life—they *are* life—evolving—evolving—day by day into something finer—something more splendid. They make me glad that I know man. They are a credit to this earth. They make me believe in God—and eternity!”

I had studied the book of psychology—now I was studying the psychology of life. And in its adolescent stage—where bud begins to open into flower—the most subtle, the most fragrant of the seven ages of man.

It was plain that Paul was to be a gentle man—strong in mind and body to wage war in behalf of every righteous cause. It was plain, too, that he would be a thoroughbred in the best sense of that word. It would be very, very hard for Paul to do a mean or a little or a shameful thing. He would have his price—but it would be very high. In all probability he would be brave enough to travel the road of his desire. He would do right as he saw it.

“But the test, Alexandra, will come later—when the boy becomes a youth. At the age when our fathers were captains of companies and our grandfathers were masters of ships, Paul will be . . .”

“I know—either chasing the eternal feminine or captaining a baseball team.”

“Yes, modern education offers creative adolescence at least that much outlet.”

“It is better than nothing.”

Replied Alexandra, “As long as our average young man can’t afford an ‘education’ and to have a wife at the same time, he will have to carry a heart-breaking load. Our system denies him an outlet, his natural right to a mate. You know. You’ve seen the marriage age set back year by year. American parents won’t endow marriage—that their children may learn the lesson that comes with struggle! But the struggle is too keen for many, and children and poverty are too often twins in the homes of young married couples. Long after

nature has ordered 'Mate,' society says, 'Don't mate; you can't afford it!' or, 'You're too young to give up your freedom.' Too often it whispers, 'Time to sow wild oats now.' Isn't that so? As it is now, young men are seldom fitted for a profession or for business before they are twenty-six, or more."

The white-pink of almond blossoms glowed softly in the darkening valleys. Strange lights played round the crown of Etna. The Ionian Sea was glowing like a sapphire. A peasant from Mola passed by, crunching a bit of dry bread and singing:

"Al! America maladetta, non ritorneremo piu."

Behind him trudged the wife, drawn, like a ripened fig. By one hand she led a child. The other arm nestled her baby, and on her back she carried a bundle of faggots.

"There it is," said Alexandra. "It's the old problem—for us, new again, for it comes in new shapes. It knocks incessantly. It wants to be solved, you know."

"Isn't it a pity?"

"You mean the woman?"

"Yes."

"No, dear, the tragedy is the man's. He's been to America, and curses it, says he will never go there any more. He has been disillusioned. Disillusions hurt. But your pity for the woman is quite wasted. You say to yourself, 'How terrible to be a female beast of burden.' But that woman is happy, because she thinks she is. She isn't wretched. She probably is a very happy little creature—and wouldn't exchange either her children or her life for mine.

"But," continued Alexandra, "that is not what I started out to say—there, in that labourer and that woman, you have the problem of woman and of labour—or, as your economics put it, Socialism and the Emancipation of Woman. For ages we've been working at these problems. But now . . . Well, it's like this, my dear—society finds that it has a new elephant on its hands."

"And that elephant is . . . ?"

"Yes, it's woman! And between this Scylla, woman, and Charybdis, labour, society tries to steer its barque into a calm sea. But our social sea must always be agitated, mustn't it?"

"I suppose so. It must be, because of its nature. It is not rigid, as granite is. It flows—now slowly as a glacier, calm, silent, and cold—now fast with loud rumblings and a glare of white heat, destroying all it meets. Or it is a tornado, black, bloody, destructive. Who knows why or how? *Eppur si muove*. It must move, or it dies."

"You see, *mon ami*, the woman and labour problem is rooted in property rights and inheritance laws. We will compete with you as far as strength permits. You can't keep us from doing that. But we can't be economically independent and beget man at the same time. The time and strength required to bear children handicaps us in the economic race. It always will."

"And Pauline," I asked, "what will become of her? Individuals are real. Pauline is real. We talk about society and what it does for us, what it proposes to do, and what it ought to do—and burn up the wires of imagination thinking what it will do. But you and I and Pauline and Paul and that peasant there and his wife and those children. . . . Why, lover of mine, *we* are society! We, all of us, make up society, don't we? All of us back there in America, we are society, are we not? And down there in that village, are people who make up another society. And we talk of the good of this and that! Shouldn't we talk rather of the good of man and woman, of the good of mankind? It seems to me that we rely too much upon principles, and not enough upon ourselves. We don't judge a movement by its leaders, but by the platform. Don't you think . . . But Pauline?"

"She is young yet—only fourteen. I wonder what life—what *will* it bring to Pauline! I don't know. Not that I think it best, but because it seems to hold a life's interest of reality

and youthfulness, I think I shall try to make it easy for her to write."

"Novels?"

"Yes, if she pleases, novels. The male writer is only a poor goose gleaned from a stubble field—there are but a few grains left. But woman has a fertile field before her—virgin and untouched. We, too, have thought deeply, and not always as you men had planned for us to think. The sky is just as deep as the ocean."

"But not the ordinary novel, Alexandra; surely not that. We have more than enough of them. If Pauline writes let us have—Pauline—Pauline, as she is to herself. Any one with ordinary intelligence can write a novel—and too many do—and get away with it. We have too many hacks who tell us what the other fellow said and what the other girl thought, whereas as a matter of fact they are not able to examine objectively their own sayings and thoughts. It is impossible for any man to pretend to know the workings of the feminine mind—or for any woman to give a correct rendering of the male motive. We can make guesses—of course—and draw inferences; and skill at that varies. But beyond guesses and inferences no one can go. We can know what we did or thought under a given set of circumstances; but when we speak for others it is by inference. Eh, *ma chérie*?"

"Yes. You begin to know too much—and I am afraid of you."

"You'd better be. Seriously now, can I ever know what takes place in your mind, save as you tell me—and by inference?"

"Well, you should—by this time. You read me as an open book."

"No. Thanks for the inference. But it can't be done. No mind is an open book to another's mind—only a few learn the language of their own. And so I say again, dear, if Pauline is to write, let her write Pauline, about what Pauline has sensed—and pondered over. A novel should be as honest as a

calculus. Novels which are merely the creation of an imagination do not interest me—I prefer to do my own imagining.”

“But, isn’t . . . ?”

“Don’t misunderstand me, dear. Don’t take me *too* seriously. I can imagine a street scene in Buenos Ayres, though I’ve never been there—but the description my imagination might draw of the sense of being forced as a girl to lead a life of shame on the street of Buenos Ayres could be of little value—at least it wouldn’t interest me; any more than it would to imagine how it feels to be King of Dahomey. But I should be very much interested in hearing from the girl and the king.”

“My! I wonder how it feels to have a scientific mind.”

“But . . . Say, Alexandra, what I want to know is: How does it feel for a great woman to have a scientific lover?”

“Ask me?”

“There is the answer. You are not great and I am not scientific.”

“But we *are* lovers, aren’t we? You and I!”

“Allah be praised, we are!”

“But, Young . . .”

“Yes, dear.”

“Let’s go back a minute. You say—let our Paulines write the truth—what they know.”

“Yes.”

“May we not also ask of the reader to interpret in truth—and not in hypocrisy? Take our own affair. Tell it to a sympathetic friend. What does he do? What does he say?”

“I see what you mean. Under certain circumstances he says . . . Well, he doesn’t say that he is envious, but he . . . oh, approves. Thinks it a rare experience. Says he ‘understands.’ But put the story into cold print, he feels compelled to exclaim ‘shocking.’ Our ideas about morality and modesty are habits of thought few of which have valid biologic basis. We have been brought up on cant and hypocrisy. The church has told us what we shall condemn, in conduct and in idea—in life and on the printed page. ‘Keep it

away from the children.' Such things were kept away from me. But I hunted them out; I imagined them forty times worse and . . ."

"Found me."

"And there you are. And here I am. And very happy, and very glad of it."

"Shocking, isn't it?"

"Oh! . . . When do we go to Egypt? You'll like Egypt!"

"I would like the North Pole—with you, much as I hate ice. Alexandra, it is more than likely that I shall learn to like you."

"You surprise me."

Do you wonder that I loved her, and was glad of it?

"And what else, Alexandra, what else will Pauline do?"

"Well, she will never have to depend upon one man. Home can't be her sole interest or maternity her sole activity. I would like to have her play her part in a wider field. I should not like to have her confront such a fate as would have been yours and Helen's had you married."

I knew now something of what it probably would have meant, had I married Helen—say, three years ago. Within six or seven years we would have had three or four children and privation, worry, debts, sickness, misunderstanding. The best ten years of our life—that should have been the most fertile in love and work, that should have made real all our dreams of happiness, when our personality should have found expression in our children—well, these ten years might have yielded other, perhaps even bitter fruit. Neither parents nor education had fitted me for fatherhood or Helen for motherhood. We would have been penalised for daring parentage. As I thought over these things, I sighed again a sigh of thankfulness.

"How now, *mon ami*?" I told Alexandra what had been going through my mind.

In just that, she suggested, lies the hardship for so many

women. They think about these things now—demand the right to win or lose according to their capacity. They must be freed of the handicap of maternity, or they can't make the most of themselves. Now they neither get what they think they deserve, nor give in proportion to their capacity. Women have new desires, new ambitions—and yet are not unsexed. Nature says, "Breed," and if the answer be "No," nature says "Die!"

Then we fell to talking about the next generation. We agreed that from nature's standpoint the life is best which is best for the unborn; but that to continue to reproduce defectives cheapens maternity and mortgages the future. Our real interest is in ourselves. About all we can hope to do is to increase our parents' fund of common sense, sobriety, freedom, and the will to dare the unknown. If we could only hand on one generation free of stupidity, covetousness, and hypocrisy—what an achievement!

"But Pauline?" I asked again.

"Let's not discuss Pauline. The way there is dark, I can't read it. You men have made this world. It's a man's world, made for men by men. We are parasites, or courtesans, or manikins."

"Don't I know better?"

"Ah, dear boy, what am I to you but courtesan? I amuse you. I please you."

"And love me?"

"Yes."

"You and I are real—as that turquoise sea, or that volcano?"

"Yes."

"And we love each other and are truly mated."

"And social outcasts! Yes, we are social outcasts—back there in America."

"But not here?"

"Yes, even here. Everywhere. Men and women will say to me. 'You have a husband; you are an adulteress.'"

"And if you divorce him and our relationship continues?"

"I cease to be an adulteress; merely a mistress."

"And if we go to a priest and he writes our names in a book and says a few words?"

"Society says, 'Come, my children; and sin no more!'"

"And Pauline?"

"Poor little Pauline. I sometimes wish she'd never been born. This man-made world is not fit for girls. You men think you suffer. But let me tell you, you don't know. . . . Only we suffer; and we must hide it."

"But you get your reward."

"Yes, in strength. Woman, after all, is stronger than man. Every woman who dares, shows much greater courage than man, because the price she pays is so much greater."

"But, Alexandra, suppose all that you said a moment ago were to come to pass. Could we be more to each other? Could we be happier? Would our position really be changed?"

"Not the position, only the name." She hesitated. "I think possibly your attitude might be changed a little. I think that if I were married to you according to form your mind would be relieved of the weight of some of its earlier inhibitions. Oh, I know they don't weigh on you now as they did. But I believe you are not quite free of them. Further than that, I am not certain that you would be happier if it were. Do you know what I mean?"

"I think so."

"Yes, that is it. As it is now I satisfy a love of conquest, deep seated, which you inherited from your hunting ancestors. The legally wedded wife of another man is still something of a trophy, a conquest—it adds zest."

"Would you marry me, Alexandra?"

"No, Young, not if I were freed by act of God."

"Why not, dear?"

"Because I, too, am all that has gone into me. The moment you became my husband, I should have a hold on you, and you would have a hold on me. That tiny silken cord—well, one of us, dear, would feel it sooner or later."

"That is, if we thought about it."

"That's it—if we thought about it. Things are, and we are what we think."

"Alexandra, do you know what I think?"

"What, silly boy?"

"That I could walk down this mountain side and up Mt. Etna there, and jump right into that crater, if I thought it would make for peace of mind and happiness for you."

"Do you know what I think? I think it is time we hunted up the children." She smiled, reward enough.

"But you would marry me, wouldn't you, dear?"

"Not to-day."

Looking back through the years, Taormina seems a mere vision of a dream. . . . Was it all true? Really true?

And I shut my eyes—and can hear her voice, feel the clasp of her hand, whiff the fragrance of her hair.

CHAPTER XXIII

IN THE GARDEN OF HADRIAN

WE fairly had to tear ourselves away from Taormina—so deeply rooted had we become. But as spring began to yield to a semi-tropical summer, we moved back to Rome for Easter, where we heard music and saw humanity at its best emotional depth. Summer found us among the Abruzzi peasants. Autumn drifted us along the Grand Canal. We had come back to Rome for Christmas.

A year had come and gone, a year whose varied panorama seemed to move by us as we sat and watched, loving it.

We were a strange little family, but one in which there had been no discord nor harsh note, nothing but mutual respect, mutual sympathy, mutual help, and love—clean, strong, unselfish. Alexandra and I were a very close little corporation of two—because our partnership was not founded solely upon sex-attraction, but upon all that derives from it plus fellowship, personal freedom, individuality, and true sex disparity. Each was the complement of the other.

Those months cannot come back again. Nothing comes back save memories. But I would not lose the memory of one day of those months. And yet a time better than that was to come for us.

We were at Tivoli, in the garden of Hadrian. The children were playing a game they were very fond of, in what had been the library of this wonderful palace. Paul was the Emperor, Pauline Empress, and they were discussing literature. Alexandra and I were sitting under an old plane-tree not far away. A soft wind blew up the Tiber from Ostium. We had picked some chicken bones, had had a bit of cheese and had nibbled

at *finochi*—and we drank each other's health from a tiny bottle of Tokay. Neither of us cared for Italian wines. Somehow they seemed not to hold the sunshine. There is a perfume in old Tokay and . . . If you know old Tokay, you know what I mean.

We had spent the day before at Corneto. It had been rather hard, but that was more than forgotten in the delight the children had had in delving into the musty tombs of long forgotten Etruscans. For Alexandra and for me the day at Tivoli was especially precious, for it was the anniversary of our meeting in London—a year since I surprised Alexandra at Charing Cross station! I remember the episode as though it were yesterday—it revealed Alexandra anew to me.

A long time we sat under the plane-tree, and not a word had been spoken. Alexandra was quite relaxed. There was a kind of purity about her then that was transcendental. You might have known her well and not suspect that she could look otherwise. Just as it is difficult to realise that the mid-winter Atlantic, goaded by the storm into hurling its mighty mass against and over ship, could ever be the placid, profound, sweet mystery it is when it is itself, unharassed by the wind. Usually Alexandra was all nerve, all emotion, all fire. Very gradually I had accustomed myself to her intensity. Then it began to appeal to me, it got hold of me.

Alexandra made me want to accomplish, to live up to the best that there was in me. Yet here I had been drifting along with her all these months just loving her and being big brother and preceptor to Paul and Pauline as best I knew. But all the while I felt a kind of strength growing within me. I came to have a new pride in my body. With exercise, simple food and an abundance of fresh air always, my skin had taken on a new kind of softness and whiteness, the muscles a hardness, and the bones and joints a suppleness I had not known before.

While it was a passive life we had been leading—and all four of us had been serenely calm—yet that nature of Alexandra's got into us deeper and deeper.

But you would have to know her in order to understand the contradiction I have in mind. Beautifully coloured by nature, of strong contrasts and placid as she was now, one could feel within her the fire one sees in the heart of an opal and the eternal warmth of a Burmese ruby.

What a trail of desolation she might have left behind her had she been less true, had she been just a little bit the wanton. I have seen a roomful of men, in the midst of an animated conversation, stop as with a sudden paralysis when Alexandra entered. Every eye turned to her instinctively, as iron filings fly to a magnet. And yet she was a slender, rather dainty woman. She did seem at times to wear rather striking clothes, but I am sure no one ever thought her overdressed. She had great daring, but with it a keen discrimination which told her just how far she could go. The bucket was filled but never a drop spilled.

When Alexandra entered a room, men's stature increased, fat men drew in their paunches, bald men put their hands to their heads, every man began to make sure that his garments and posture were correct.

When Alexandra came into a room she recognised every one with a glance and a smile that was not quite a smile but suggested one by the partly opened mouth and a sweep of the eyes. Instinctively men paid her homage and courted her. From the very first I could see this. Before I knew her great heart and her sincerity I used to imagine so many things that brought terror to me. Did she but let her eyes rest for an extra moment upon this man or that, my innate jealousy raved and burned and choked me. Sometimes, when I had to leave her in the company of another man . . . Did he, too, dare to love her? More than once I have tramped from Boston to Cambridge, to walk off a mood of futile, stupid jealousy. All the three miles and at times far into the night, I would be tortured with a madness that almost drove me wild. Often, after I had been tossing about in bed for hours, I almost decided to go back and assure myself that I was mistaken.

How ashamed of myself I came to be! Men are brutal, so coarse that it is hard for us to know pure gold when we have it in our hands. For ages we have been fostering suspicion because we know how often we are base hypocrites.

It was the anniversary of our—I wanted to call it wedding but Alexandra objected. She disliked the word. It brought up too ugly memories. To tell the truth I had quite forgotten the significance of the day, until Alexandra said at breakfast:

"What day is it, *mon ami*?"

"January seventh, *querida mia*. And on the seventeenth we are due at Cairo."

"Yes, I know. But to-day—what is *this* day? What . . ."

"Why, to-day we are going to Tivoli again."

"So, you don't love me any more! If we were married I should scold you for having forgotten that just one year ago to-day you came to me—that just one . . ."

"Yes, woman of mine, life for me is just one year old. They say life is love—and I believe it—then the love of my life is one year old. What a year! What a year, Alexandra!"

"Hasn't it been glorious!"

"Sorry you sent for me?"

"The children simply had to have a tutor!" And she smiled a wicked little smile. "But you've earned your right to live," she went on in a more serious tone—"never have children had such a teacher." Then—after a pause—"Or woman such a lover."

We feil to talking of love and life and work and tnings.

And Alexandra had said, "We mustn't talk of love, we must talk about noble things!" And she had smiled. "Wouldn't that be what . . . well, say, what your mother would ask of us?"

"Yes, but that's because she doesn't know you—one and only woman."

"But there are as good fish in . . ."

"But you're not a fish—there is only one moon, one Rome, one Morning Star, one Psyche, one . . ."

Just then Paul came running. "Master, come please and tell sister and me about this mosaic—she says it is the head of Hippocrates. I say it is Aristotle." And he led me away to the Hospital—just off the court of the Library. The mosaic in dispute proved to be the head of Hippocrates. And Paul said, "Well, I'm glad you were right, Sister. I did think, for once, you were wrong." And Paul was no prig—just frank.

Were there ever such children! Their love, their mutual admiration and respect for and their confidence in each other were as fine as anything I have ever seen. Pauline was quite as proud of her little brother as he was of her. I have heard them discuss and debate some mooted question—the name of a plant—the sex of a bug—the tense of a verb—the significance of a battle—the virtue of a Pope—the excellence of a king—for an hour at a time, but not one word of bitterness or personal animosity.

"Thank you, Big Brother." Thus Paul, and I returned to Alexandra.

"Those children of ours"—I could really feel that way about them—"get into me, Alexandra. They can't live much longer. The good die young—they tell us. They're too good to be true."

Alexandra made the sign of the cross, against the evil eye—after the manner of Italian peasant women.

"But why, dear? Aren't all well-bred children that way? Aren't . . .?"

"All your children are that way. I sometimes think you are as wonderful as a mother as you would be as a wife."

"Not wife—lover. I shall be no man's wife again. But I should like to have . . ."

"Me—for a son?"

"No—a son from you."

"Well?"

"No, no, dear, please don't . . ."

"Alexandra, I am falling in love with you. I thought . . ."

"Before?"

"I was. It gets worse and worse. I am quite mad now."

"And yet under different circumstances you and I might have been Mr. and Mrs. Garvin, for instance, or Mr. and Mrs. Flodden, or . . ."

"Well, it would require some stretch of the imagination to think of you as the Old Man characterised Mrs. Garvin—you are a Saint, Alexandra, but not a Catherine—the saints be praised! But how would we look—say, as Mr. and Mrs. Flodden!"

"We might look all right—but things are not always as they seem."

"No, nor do they seem always the same to the same individual. Even you do not seem the same to me now—you seem something quite different from the you I knew on Beacon Street."

"Yes, my dear, even women are to seem different to men hereafter."

"You see," continued Alexandra, "woman . . . You men have been setting the pace for us and we, well, we have used our mother wits, and we haven't done so badly. Now we are beginning to realise our power."

"Power?"

"Yes. Don't you see that the next generation lies in our laps? It is quite within our power to say whether the earth shall possess a single inhabitant a hundred years from to-day. We can stop the whole thing, close down the factories, stop the trains, and the ships."

"And would you do it?"

"No, because men will come to their senses, in time. You will not force us to put away our lovers, because you love to be loved."

"But women, they tell us, will lose the sex sense."

"Woman, possibly—but not women. Don't believe all you are told. Telling is a fine art—and many profit greatly thereby. No, you Christian men have tried to make us deny our sex impulse. Have you succeeded? The more you deny it us,

the more it is developed. From daring to think we shall soon get the courage to talk. We, too, may play the very devil with the proprieties. We are not going to deny the existence of things—and inwardly be consumed with a craving to know them. And little girls can have cravings to know all; even burning fires to experience all. There have been some famous women explorers. And when we get going, when we really decide that we are in the race, we shall shock some of you. We are no longer tied to a skillet or a sewing machine. You can't fool us any longer by talking about our 'innate limitations.' There is just one big difference between you and me, *mon ami*."

I knew what that was.

"And we are going to make you men pay for that difference. The old cry, equality of opportunity—well, we will get a better one than that. It all comes down to what society wants."

"But society rarely wants the same things twice. Our wants grow with our wants. Each want satisfied prepares the ground for a new want."

"But just now society says it wants—what? 'Peace?'"

"Yes."

"And what else?"

I guessed children.

"Right; society says it wants children—without them it cannot last. All right, let society pay for them. Too many unfit mothers now bring too many unfit children into the world. Too many healthy women are denied healthy maternity—and are stifled, or become impotent, or insane. Women demand economic independence and equal opportunity."

"But suppose society doesn't want children, isn't willing to pay for them?"

"Then it will get them as it does now, willy-nilly. If the Puritans of Boston won't breed, the Slavs and the Italians will. If the whites won't reproduce themselves, the blacks will. Isn't that so? If that were not so, life would have ceased long ago, eh, *mon ami*?"

"Or nature would have invented a new way to propagate life."

I was thinking. I must have looked amused.

"Penny!" exclaimed Alexandra.

"I was just wondering what a society made up of Floddens would look like." For I had told Alexandra about Flodden. "I suppose Flodden thinks himself perfectly capable of organising society."

"Yes, just as you think you are."

I admitted it.

"And what is your idea of society, foolish boy?"

"Give me something hard, Alexandra. That's too easy. My idea of an ideal society?"

"Yes."

"You and me and the children—on an island—way out in some tropic sea. Plenty of palms and, oh, all sorts of trees—trees on which hammocks ripen, and trees that grow tennis balls and rackets. In the centre of the island there would be a little round desert of pure white sand, and right in the middle of that, a deep pool of clear blue-white water, arched over with palms. There at daybreak each day we would bathe and grow a day younger; and each night we would bathe in the surf and grow a day older."

"Would there be no music?"

"Oh, yes. That island would be filled with birds—crown-pigeons and lyre-birds, and birds-of-paradise, and ostriches for the children to ride, and plenty of whippoorwills and long-billed toucans, magpies and bobolinks and woodcock. No English sparrows. Plenty of nightingales; and . . ."

"And laughing jackasses?"

"Only one. I think I could handle that situation."

"Yes, dear, I think you could. It is fine to be young and think you can handle any situation."

"But I can, Alexandra—with you to help." That's the way

I put it. I thought she helped! Men too often refer to the mainspring of their lives as a "helper."

Alexandra thought to hide it from me, but I saw the little handkerchief go up to a little black eye and I saw a damp spot on the white cambric, and she saw that I knew and the tear in the other eye ploughed its way down the rich tan of her face. Men are such unfeeling brutes. For the life of me I couldn't have guessed the thing that had touched some particular nerve in this little woman of fire and nerve to loosen those two tears. Her face hadn't changed at all, only the lips hugged each other too closely. I wanted to kiss that one tear away. And I did. What could I have said? What could I have done?

"What a foolish boy you are. You make me so happy, I couldn't help it. I, too, would narrow my world down to you and me, and Paul and Pauline."

And she smiled.

"Oh! how selfish we are," she said at last, freeing herself and straightening out the locks which I had tangled.

"You mean our going off alone to our island? You mean we should stay here and help reform things?"

Her eyes snapped again. "If there is anything I hate, it is a reformer, for of all selfish people the usual casual reformer is the most despicable. He is the true charlatan, and the she-reformer the real prostitute." Again her little body was tense and I could feel myself quiver as though I were preparing to run a race. "Out of all the wise sayings that we have allowed to stay in the lumber room of our mind through all ages, there are about three that are worth while, that mark us off from the beasts we once were. There are three things in the world: faith, hope and understanding, and the greatest of these is understanding."

"And second?"

"The second is this: Behold the beam in your own eye and prate not at all of the mote in your neighbour's eye."

"And third?"

"To the not-good, I will be good, in order to make them good."

"Who said that?"

"A Chinaman, a hundred and fifty years before Plato wrote the 'Republic' and six centuries before the Prince of Peace delivered the Sermon on the Mount."

"And from everybody who, doing one thing, tells other people to do quite other things, may the good Lord deliver us. And also from people who preach lofty ideals and live the life of sordid commonplace cowards. And may that society utterly perish from the face of the earth which denies its best bedroom and most loving care to the scarlet woman and the young thief."

"And, good Lord, pity the poor in ideas. But don't let's pity anybody else. Merciful heaven, are we to go on forever self-pitying people! Let's do something for them. Let's not talk about putting ourselves in their places. Let's get into their places and give them ours, or shut up!

"And let us be human and use such common sense as mother nature gave us before we buried ourselves beneath the dust of superstition, cant, and hypocrisy, the whole mass floating in a slime of muck-raking, vice investigating, sin condemning. Young man, when you tire of me . . ."

I fumbled in my vocabulary for words fit to form a protest. Her eyes begged me to be silent.

"Best and only real lover of my life, when you tire of me—and I hope you never will—when you do and want to do something for your fellow men, set an example—be yourself, mind your own business, go your own way. Follow your nose when the scent is sweet, your eyes when the vision is clear and the scene entrancing, your ear where there is music, and your touch when the feel is pleasure and not pain. Just do—or at least be a respectful listener. And love the things you love wisely, but never to a logical conclusion. Logical conclusions are illusions and . . . worse."

I had no reply. You must think I rarely had when talking

with Alexandra. It was partly that way. She talked—I listened. And I was a good listener. There was that charm in her voice that I often asked her questions merely that I might listen to it. And then when I get to talking about Alexandra—or think about her—I lose all consciousness of my own personality—what I did, what I said, what I thought, seems so . . . so little worth while.

But I was more than passive listener—I assure you of that. We had some famous disagreements—Alexandra and I. But somehow—like Paul and his sister—I always felt she must be right. I was drifting—mentally, physically—but I was growing. There were times when the fires of my old boyhood ambition would stir into flame, and for the moment I would be wild to get hold of the world and fight for my life as other ordinary mortals do.

Yes, there were times—and they became more and more frequent—when I would say to myself: “Young Low, you are twenty-eight years old! The great of this earth have finished their great achievements by that age. And you? What have you done?” And I would catalogue my deeds, with little lost in the full credit given each one. But it was not enough. “Are *you* one of the *few* men who count?” I would say to myself. “Can you do things with the mass? Can you lead people—lift them out of the routine and direct them to the enchanted city where they may be happy? Can you, then, lead them back to their tasks—better, happier, more efficient, more contented with their lot? Are you getting the most out of your life and putting more back than you take out? Are you a *whole* man, a *big* man, an *efficient* man? Do you *know* what you want? Do you *get* it?”

Twenty-eight years old! Why, I used to think that at twenty-one I would have settled my desires, my accomplishments, my habits, and my worth. It seemed to me, at times, that I was worse off now than I had been then, for I still kept putting off the time when all these things must be done. Yet I thought

I was mature! I was only sophisticated in spots. That isn't maturity.

But all the while—I mean during that first European experience—I'd been gradually working over into a taste for things mental rather than physical. In the laboratory I had studied form. I had now come to take a greater interest in function. I kept asking myself: "What is the relation of things? Fossil bones are of no value in themselves—only by the light they may shed on the story of growth."

And now the question seemed to look even larger: How am I related to things? How may I interpret the story of *my* growth? Back of this, still, and more fundamental was the biologic impulse which says: "Grow!"

It is easy enough to think deifically; to be good is quite another affair.

While I was fretting about these things and hoping that my wish-to-do would not interfere with my will-to-do, Alexandra had settled down among the cushions and was fast asleep. So I hunted up the children. Pauline, in the fork of a tree, was munching figs, and Paul was holding forth to a couple of peasant lads from Regresso about Boston as an educational centre. Paul was almost as much at home in Italian now as in English.

I joined the conversation in so far as they would let me. But the two Italians soon lost interest in education. Paul was a boy. But I was a tourist—I looked like possible business. Their pockets bulged with souvenirs and postcards. They couldn't sell anything to me, and soon took themselves off.

"Do you like those boys, Paul?"

"Some parts of them!"

"Which? Why?"

"They won't play fair—but I like to talk to them. They are quick—they think like lightning. They don't know very much, but they are clever enough to hide it. They . . . say, Master, they don't think much of us."

"Why, Paul?"

"We're too slow—too honest—too generous. They think we're foolish—or stupid. But they're all right. We get along fine. But I like the boys over there"—pointing to the Abruzzi, beyond the Sabines.

"Why, Paul?"

"Ah . . . why . . . they're more simple—they're just boys—they haven't learned so much. . . . They're not so puffed up."

The boy near Rome was a snob, the boy from the country was—just a boy. Paul preferred the democrat naturally. How this lad did get into and around the hearts of the peasants as well as the city dwellers we came into contact with! It was always the same, in Sicily, in Rome, in Venice, among the Abruzzi. I couldn't have done it. I should have been afraid of them, or "above" them.

Mind you, Paul was always himself. He never descended to a rank lower than that to which his qualifications entitled him. But he asked no odds, expected no favours, demanded no handicap. The *I'm First* spirit was strong in him. Nature intended it should be, in all boys. But when Paul was first it was not because of his name, his ancestry, his wealth, his clothes, or his nationality—it was because, in an open and fair race, his merit had quietly won him position. Other boys knew this and envied him.

I feel certain that the two boys from Regresso left us with a new conception of the despised *Angli-Sassoni*. But then, Paul was not an Anglo-Saxon. He was a young Cosmopolitan.

Pauline has finished her figs and was calling for Paul—he had promised to race her the length of the Stadium. I offered to referee. "No need," said Paul. "I shall beat her badly, it's best that we be alone—but, afterward . . . Remember your promise, Big Brother!"

The day was spent. I returned to Alexandra, who was herself again—had had her forty winks—and was reading Boccaccio.

"Do you know, love of mine, that it's five o'clock?"

"I am not surprised," was her reply.

Of course not. "Would you be surprised if I told you that I loved you?"

"But why don't you?"

"I love you; you know I love you, Alexandra."

"I am a woman, foolish boy, and no woman ever tires of hearing it. Those words nurture her very soul, as spring rain the seedlings."

"And will you always be a seedling?"

"Ah, *mon ami*, listen." We could hear the children coming. "*There* are the seedlings."

"Yes, but neither is so eternally young as the mother, my beloved. Pauline has an oldish spirit, but old age will never overtake Paul. And Pauline, it becomes clearer each day, is to have her mother's fire, energy, power to compel men to admit the sweetness of life and acknowledge the wisdom of the Almighty in creating them man and woman."

"But, Master!" exclaimed Paul.

"Yes, Paul?"

"Have you forgotten your promise? To-day you were to tell Sister and me all about Hadrian—about what he read, where he had been, what he did, and . . . what he thought about things."

"And how you and I are just like Hadrian and how and why we are not?"

"Yes—and everything. And about Mrs. Hadrian. And now . . ."

"And now we've got to go. But . . . Listen, children, we won't go back to Rome to-night, we will stay at Tivoli. And in the morning we three will come down here at sun-up and make a whole day of it."

As a matter of fact we made a week of it. And when we returned to Rome, we felt that we really knew a great man.

CHAPTER XXIV

ON THE NILE

YOU may be able to explain it. I can't. I mean you who have made the Nile journey. Those who have made it in their own dahabeeyah will agree with me that it must remain inexplicable. I don't mean the pyramids, or the sand, or this or that. I mean the amazing joy of the journey. Always, of course, under favourable circumstances. A man out of place in heaven would be most unhappy.

That desert! Why does it eat into one's heart so? But, of course, the sea can do the same thing—it will not be denied its fascination. Something within us vibrates when we retrace the scenes of a life lived long ago. Are we emotional harps played upon by subtle recollections stored up in the cells of our body since the days when we were Silurian old or older?

Alexandra thought that it might be.

Do you know how it feels to journey up the Nile, all the while nursing a hope that the river is without end? That it goes on and on? And that you will go with it?

The day I have in mind Alexandra and I left our dahabeeyah to visit a temple several miles back on the desert. The whole family had picnicked there the day before in the shade of a clump of date-palms. We had had great fun all that day long. Paul especially was happy, for he had made friends with an imp of a camel-boy who had picked up a little English on the Midway, in 1893. By night, Paul knew much about the tricks of camels and the Arabic words for camel-trappings and other such things. The day had been so fine we thought we would like to try it again—just we two.

The camel-boy went with us. And so we humped across the tawny sand, we two, on camels. There were times—and those were best—when I bribed the boy to keep out of sight. Then it seemed that we two were the only people on earth, out there in the desert, among drifting dunes and long windrows of yellow sand, heaving, tossing, billowy like a perturbed sea. Nothing in sight but just sand—yellow sand—and a blue, blue sky, and sun—and nothing else at all. . . . That was the world!

"Do you know, *mon ami*, if I really thought that space out there in front of us unending, if I thought this sand trail wouldn't lead anywhere, but just go on and on, straight through to the end of the world, do you know what I would like to do?"

I knew. "Just keep . . ."

"That's it. Just keep going."

"But the children?"

"And your father and mother, and Billie, and Ann?"

"And . . ."

"Would you?"

"Yes, best beloved, with you I would go straight on. Everything and everybody else would have to fend for themselves."

"That is what love is?"

"That is what love is."

"But," said Alexandra, as we humped back to our little white "Isis" on the river that evening, "of course we wouldn't have gone on."

"No, I suppose not."

"No, we're all anchored. We've all given hostages to fate. But . . ."

"But it is something to have felt that way, isn't it?"

"It is, my dear."

Now, if you don't know Egypt it's no use telling you about it. No, I will not risk it—trying to tell you about Egypt. But I will have you know that if from the parapet of the Alabaster

Mosque whose slender minarets witness man's love for Allah and the beautiful, you have never watched the sun drop into the sandy sea beyond the pyramids across the great river bearing on its bosom the commingled blue of sky and golden yellow of the west—with, below you, vast strange incongruous Cairo . . . Why, if you haven't seen such a sunset—and there is none other such in all the world—hearing only the human voices welling up from below, and the shrill cries of the kites overhead . . . Why, then you have something to look forward to. And if you haven't sat on Karnak's Pylon with the woman you love better than all the world, and watched the moonbeams play hide-and-seek among the monstrous columns . . . Well, if this has not been your experience, there is something in store for you.

By the time we were ready to start back, the children, especially Paul, had begun to hunger for Cairo and other familiar places. They wanted more movement, more stress. The child's mind is more fluid. If it can't go on, it wastes no time in vain regrets. It is quite willing to go back—even to school after the long vacation.

We had tied up at Tel-el-Amarna. I wanted to explain to the children the methods employed by the ancient Egyptians in quarrying granite for the mighty monoliths they used in obelisk or temple. Then, too, excavation in a one-time metropolis was being carried on by the Egyptian Society.

I had done my best—which means that I had succeeded, for we usually succeed when we do our best—to make real to my little scholars the spirit and the mentality and the ways of these very curious, very human, very industrious Egyptians. Of course, you may urge that this was queer mental food for a girl of fourteen and a boy of twelve. And if you do, I have no reply—for you may be committed to some educational fetish. I am not.

For more than three weeks we had had no mail. It was accumulating somewhere no doubt. But we were long past

due in Cairo—which mattered not. In the lot brought to us that night, quite a little sackful, was a bundle of newspapers—clippings rather—sent me by an aunt. A dear old soul, that aunt of mine—seemingly pure, guileless, innocent, and incapable of evil thought or deed. And yet, by the time I had gone through that collection of clippings, I knew all the scandal of Lanyon and of my county and of my state, and of every one that this beloved aunt had heard me mention. That was her idea of news! That issue of the *Tri-weekly New York Tribune*, or the *Columbus Dispatch*, or the *Cincinnati Enquirer*, whose pages did not contain at least one startling sensation—the murder of husband by wife, the rape of an innocent child, the lynching of a negro, a destructive earthquake, a death-dealing tornado, or a divorce scandal, rich in details of adulterers and adulteries compounded—that issue of the paper contained no news.

"We are all adventurers," was Alexandra's comment. "Hide it as best we may, it comes out sooner or later under stress of this or that, in that form or this, it comes out. Oh . . ."

"Or else you are not true daughters of mothers."

"Just so."

Well, of the "news" one item alone was . . . I don't know what to call it. I had intended to say important. No doubt it was important to some people, at least. Prof. Henry Flodden had died, by his own hand.

Alexandra had finished her letters. She had no "News." I re-read, this time aloud, the brief account of Flodden's tragic end. On returning from Europe, he had surprised his wife in a downtown New York hotel, where she had been living for five days as the wife of a prominent Philadelphia physician. There had been no scene. Flodden had simply taken his wife home and talked the whole matter over with her, and they had agreed to go on as if nothing had happened.

"Which was foolish," put in Alexandra. "It can't be done. If they had agreed to go on as if something had happened, facing it although they knew it would hurt them the rest of their

lives, and knowing that they couldn't possibly get back to the old condition, but had agreed that they still respected each other—each other, mind you—enough to go on, something might have come of it.”

“Well, go on,” she added.

“And the next morning Prof. Flodden shot himself in the bathroom.”

“And that was the next best thing he could have done,” put in Alexandra.

“But,” I protested, “did Flodden have a right to kill himself?”

“Certainly, and it was a fine thing. We’ve had quite enough of women killing themselves. It is high time men bore their share of the trouble they make. More of them would, if they were as brave as they boast they are.”

“But Flodden did kill himself.”

“But how? Why didn’t he go about his business for a few days and give his wife a chance to get on her feet? Why didn’t he deliberately set his home in order and then drop down the Bay some Saturday afternoon with rod and tackle and get tangled in a bog—or accidentally shoot himself?”

“Well, why didn’t he?”

“Because, vain egotists that we are, we don’t suicide that way—that would defeat our object. You see, dear, your friend Flodden shot himself to punish his wife. But it doesn’t work out that way.”

“But doesn’t he punish her?”

“To be sure, but he isn’t here to enjoy his victory. Here is a death with a real sting. Let’s not call him a coward. Suicide may be the supreme test of bravery—or the crowning folly of a misguided life. But think of the load Mrs. Flodden must bear—the memory of that body. Were slaves butchered to make a Roman holiday a less gruesome spectacle? Reporters will torture her, to get news for that aunt of yours and for me and you and for every one who reads. My God! How we gloat over the suffering, the misery, the squalor, the deg-

radation, the vice, the evils of our fellow creatures—provided, of course, its slime does not bespatter our own skirts.”

“The world is better, there is more of compassion abroad. There . . .”

“That’s it, compassion *abroad!* And it is abroad. My friends of Beacon street, or you of Lanyon, are more hurt by the death of a pet canary or a blooded bull-terrier than by the loss of a life on a battlefield. Paul’s grandfather can be really pained by the death of a club crony, or a classmate. But his insatiate greed for railroad dividends, and for profits from his cotton mills closes his eyes to the toll of human lives in wrecks and the evils of child labour.”

What could I say? All this from a woman whose life was that of serene fire. I never knew what she would say next. She was so unconventional, so human. I remarked that I had never heard her assail the character of any individual. “You never seem moved by an innate hostility toward any member of your own sex. *You*, at least, are not a cat.”

“Cats, we *are* cats, all of us, every one of us. Why not? Without them the animal world would be a dreary waste—nothing but sheep and giraffe, whales and bats, anteaters and monkeys: Why, cats . . . do you ever know what a cat will do next? And yet, men call us cowards! Have you ever watched a cat brought to bay by a big dog? Cats have ideas. They are not to be coerced. You don’t teach cats tricks. You play with them, pet them, love them.”

“And marry them?”

“Look here, dear, don’t you think you have put off reading your father’s letter quite long enough?” And there was just a suggestion of a twinkle in her eyes.

There *was* a letter from Father. I had put off reading it as long as I decently could. Father had become very much distressed over my prolonged stay in “those heathenish, outlandish places.” When we were among the Abruzzi he was particularly solicitous about my health and general welfare. He

warned me against "those poor, dirty, brutal, degraded creatures—diseased and debased." He was always cautioning me to be on my guard against "those awful depraved murderous villains, who would just as soon stick a knife into you as not."

But these were not the worst of Father's fears. "You are young yet," he would write; "please, oh please, be careful not to let any one influence you against the blessed teachings of the Holy Bible. Follow its precepts and you cannot go astray. When the devil comes to you in the guise of one who could raise a doubt in your mind as to the truthfulness of a single line of that Word, bid him begone and cast his thoughts from you."

It was nearly a year before Father learned that Alexandra was not American-born. His anguish was great when he found out that I was brought into daily contact with a "foreign woman." To Father, foreigners were foreigners—and the greater their distance from Anglo-Saxon, the more foreign they were, and therefore the more "outlandish."

Father once spoke of Alexandra as "that Polish woman!" I said too much in defence of her. Father was suspicious, and Mother urged me to write her "just what it all meant."

"Is it really true," she wrote, "that Mrs. Lanfiere has children and that you are their teacher?"

You see, they even doubted Paul and Pauline!

They could not make it out at all. But Alexandra understood how they felt. Was there anything that woman couldn't understand!

I read the letter. There was nothing new in it. Why couldn't Father understand? Why must he always be urging me to come home?

The sun had kicked his heels into the sands of the Libyan desert and the stars were playing leap-frog overhead. For half an hour I was alone on the deck of our little floating home. Alexandra was seeing the children to bed. There was

no sound save their cheery prattle and the weird and never-to-be-forgotten creak, creak, creak of the *shadoofs*.

By and by she came back to me and stretched out at full length on a tiger skin, her head on its head. On a saddle bag once worn by a camel across the sands of Persia and fit for the Princess it was made for, I sat cross-legged, as I had been wont to do in the *tipis* of the West.

The world was ours, and the night. We took stock of ourselves—and of the night. For a long time no word was spoken, and all the while the old Nile purred on to the sea, lapping and tapping at our boat as it hurried by.

"The gods have been good to me, Alexandra."

"They *are* reckless sometimes, but in the long run they even it up. No one ever got all the good or evil that his neighbours might think due him. But it evens up. But I agree with you, dear, that the gods have been very, very good to us."

"Will they finally play us false?"

"They are not likely to. It depends largely upon what we do. But . . . we are here. This is our time. It may never come again."

"Why do you love me, and why do I love you?"

"Young, you are an eternal question mark! Youth is so curious. Do you really want to know?"

I did, but I was afraid to press the point, for I had agreed more than once that it was sufficient to live and love.

"I love you because I want you. I want you. I, *all* of my body. Every particle of me wants you. But—and this is the main thing, *mon ami*—when it gets you it is satisfied and it exalts and is lifted up to heaven . . . and wants you again . . . and again . . . and again."

"Is that all?"

"No, dear, but it is the corner-stone.

"You see," she went on, "you and I are . . . Some of your ideas may bore me now and then, but you yourself never. With you I do not suffer indigestion. After all, when we get down to the bone and clean away all this rubbish about incom-

patibility of temper, and so on, most divorces grow out of such indigestion."

"What do you mean? Tell me about it."

"You are an anatomist, a biologist, and yet you and your kind know so little about the things really worth knowing. With your scalpel and microscope you discover only two things—the two great passions. It is all right to talk about the human desire to beget. But, after all, children are the consequence. The fundamental desire, after the hunger for life itself has been satisfied, is for man and woman to come together. If that does not happen as it should, as nature means that it shall, marriage turns out to be a square peg in a round hole—a failure.

"Modern marriages are strange things. We try to fool ourselves. Once we let instinct choose. Now we deny instinct—and what have we to take its place? We fall in love, we say. With what? Every woman would like to *know* the young man about to become her husband. But how can she? There are some things we can get on approval—but not husbands.

"Oh, I have seen," she continued, "too much misery in married life. I don't mean that every couple is unhappy—or even that the majority of them are. But quite too many are. Woman's natural impulses have been checked, buried deep. Yet they influence her in ways she knows not. Her mind is filled with romance. Her virginity is the priceless capital she has to invest in the one supreme enterprise of her life. She must invest—or sprout in a cellar. Marriage legalises the contract and approves the sale of her virginity. Industrial-commercial relations would bankrupt at once if people entered upon them as they do upon matrimony.

"Well, our young woman, knowing nothing of life's weapon's, comes up to the altar. Look at her—the trappings, gilt, tinsel, the garish ceremony. Consider the state of mind of her father and mother. Look at the faces of the friends gathered there—the vulgar curious spectators at the rear. The dour-faced minister of the gospel does his part. Oh, I never

see one of these towers of human folly without wanting to weep. Of a simply normal natural business of life we have made a house of coloured cards, tied together with white ribbons and a ring and decorated with orange blossoms."

"And then?"

"Yes. And then—the honeymoon! And after that . . . They wake up . . . too often to find that nature did not intend them for each other. There is no affinity. He gives free reign to a passion long held in check without consideration of her feelings. He finds in his arms a thing with only enough life to hate or feel aversion. And then begin the long years of trying to do that which they believe society expects of them—of trying to live the life that convention demands. Poor woman, she knows she is shelf-worn—that she had but one career open to her. Shall she admit failure? Divorce means that for her. But it is more than that. For years her silly mind has been building an air-castle—her married life! Life to her meant birth, school, marriage, children maybe, and death. And the greatest of these was—marriage! How can she go to her father and say she has made a terrible mistake? Shall she break her mother's heart? Shall she disgrace her friends and relatives? And herself? Well, she is only fit for the rummage-sale. And so she sticks. She has to, poor thing. She made her bed, let her lie in it!"

"But, Alexandra, mine, there is more between you and me than just That."

"I know it, but That exists. Without That no true marriage is possible. But the soundest marriage has something more than that."

"Yes, I know." And I did know. I knew that between Alexandra and me there was a feeling of comradeship. She was my friend and I hers. She wore no ring of mine, nor I a chain of hers. Nothing held us, save desire. We accounted to no minister, parish church, vow, or promise. Our relationship had simply been one long consummated courtship. We did not do this, or feel that, because we ought to, or because it was ex-

pected of us. I did not worship at her shrine for fear of punishment, but because there was that in me which impelled worship, even as I am impelled to be joyous when in the presence of an azure sea, or a sunrise on the plains.

"But it takes two to love, Alexandra, doesn't it?"

"Yes."

"Well, then, why is it that so many women and men go on battering against the bars after the love of the other is dead?"

"Obsession—instinct—a form of insanity—the thing that makes a drowning man clutch at a straw—or a starving man steal. It springs from the basic sources of life. The man who pursues a wife who has gone astray, for instance—what makes him fight on, on, and on to regain that love?"

"Does he ever? Isn't it usually the other way?"

"Yes, to both, my dear. More often it is the woman who goes on fighting, hoping, struggling, consuming herself, until finally she may become a marital anarchist—an avenger! She spares nothing—self, children, husband, parents, relatives, friends. She is an outlaw—against society, organised or otherwise.

"But why does she fight? Isn't it plain? She fights for her life as she sees it. Suppose our old dragoman, Mohammed Ali, should throw you into this crocodile-infested river. Would you fight? Would you struggle—scratch—scream? I am afraid you would. It is the instinct of every living thing in this world to fight danger. To live is the function of life."

"What are we to do? Go back to the promiscuity of animals?"

"If necessary, or at least far enough in that direction to get started on the right track again."

"Trial marriage?"

"Why not? That is the rule of life in other respects. Why not in the most serious and fundamental of all human relationships? But this will not come yet. The virgin still commands a fictitious price. But the grey mare is the better horse."

"Well, is it man's fault?"

"Yes, but women must pay—because we have thought what you told us to think. In trying to comply with your demands, we are what you have made us. Now we wake up. We rebel. We refuse to be bought and sold. We refuse to have a fictitious value set up on maidenship. We propose to be women. We will bear families if we please. We will . . . Did you ever stop to consider what would happen if women really took to the warpath? If, instead of scratching each other . . ."

"Why do you scratch each other?"

"Nature. It is cat law."

"Why do you betray your friends? Why will a woman bare her immortal soul to a man, and cover it up to a woman, though that woman be her best friend?"

"Why? Simply because . . . Well, we don't intend to. Men have learned the cost of betraying secrets—developed a kind of business ethics—and know when to keep still. We do not know *how* to keep them. Mrs. A. meets Mrs. B., has a delectable morsel—concerning Mrs. C. Now Mrs. C. is Mrs. A.'s very good friend, and Mrs. A. would not betray Mrs. C. But it will do no harm, she thinks, to tell the story—as a 'story.'

"Hear about that woman who discovered her husband in . . .? No? Well, this woman went downtown the other day, wearing a silver-fox coat she tried to smuggle in from Europe last winter, and . . ."

"And the story is out. Mrs. B. knows the woman at once. Who of their set doesn't know the story of the smuggled coat? Oh, we have finesse, we women—but not in keeping each other's secrets."

"Well, trial marriage, and then what?"

"Independence. Strip marriage down to marriage. It is no longer to be a career, a prop, a shield—a pass to glory, private cars, diamonds, servants, irresponsibility, whims, moods. It is no longer to be all of a woman's life, but only that part

of it which it really is. Once we *earned* the *right* of support. Now we don't. Not that we wouldn't. We haven't changed—the system is changed. And we haven't fitted into it yet. Our myriad material wants are supplied by department stores, and servants, nurses, and maids have taken away our occupation. We have nothing to do. With the inevitable result—we get in the way, get our fingers in the machinery, our hair in the belt—and our mangled bodies choke up the wheels of life. The modern American wife is the most useless luxury in the world. When marriage ceases to be woman's one great adventure—when marriages are really affairs of convenience—social arrangements to promote the life of the species and furnish a ground for mutual help and strength—then woman is in a fair way to see a honeymoon which will last longer than three weeks."

"Could our honeymoon last indefinitely?"

"Certainly not. The very idea is absurd—contrary to its very nature. White heat is consuming—it burns itself out. A healthy love may go on until the end. But 'mad love' . . . That is why so much of our talk about 'perfect' marriage is all illusion—as is the idea that any two people could ever be, all their lives, madly in love with each other. Even with you, my dear, the man element more and more dominates the male."

I denied it. And yet it is the natural process—the normal evolution of every natural man. Love is older than brains—and more fundamental. The flowers love without brains. But the distinguishing feature of man is his headpiece—the value of which is in the contents and the way he uses it in life's journey. One kind of head takes the bumpkin through the forest, another guides the mariner over the seas, still another suffices for the tourist in Egypt. No head at all is needed to procreate. But for the man who journeys through the whole cosmic universe more than mere head is necessary. He must have brains.

I'd been thinking more and more about what kind of a journey I must be setting out on.

But Alexandra was real—and my journey . . . “Well,” I said to myself, “I am on the way.”

From across the shifting sands came the voice of the *muezsin* calling the Faithful to prayer.

“Do you know it’s midnight?”

“Clocks came in at the door when love flew out of the window. Of course I don’t. I really don’t care.”

Alexandra put out her hand and I helped her to her feet.

“And now, *mon ami*, kiss me—here—for I want to be alone to-night.”

There was something about that kiss which belied her words.

CHAPTER XXV

THE RENUNCIATION

IT was the second day after we reached Cairo. Alexandra and I were having tea on Shepherd's terrace. The children were playing in the hotel garden.

A page handed Alexandra a cablegram. Cablegrams were rather rare for her. It was long. She read it again and again. Her face flushed, her eyes blazed, her breath came shorter. She put out her hands toward me—her face flooded with a puzzled radiance. Then she checked herself and the light in her eyes was curtailed by the narrowing lids. I knew she would speak when she had anything to say.

She folded the paper, put it in her bag and sat gazing into her teacup. Once or twice her eyes shot upward and passed up and down me like the sweep of a searchlight. I could only wonder; I did not move. Something was going on in that compact little body. A struggle of some sort. Her eyes narrowed until I could just barely see the gleaming coal of fire within.

"Can I do anything, dear? Can I help?"

Her little black eyes were burning into the bottom of her teacup.

"Please help me, will you? I want something very much. You *can* help me. You can help, dear, by doing as I wish." She spoke in a low, tense voice.

"Anything in the world."

"Get our dragoman and the carriage. Give up our rooms here. Find out the first sailing from Alexandria for Naples and for New York. I am going over to the Mena House. I want you to stay here until I send for you. . . ."

"And that will be?"

"Within a very few days, dear. Please ask no more now."

"Only one thing, Alexandra."

"And that I give you gladly. I love you as I never loved you before. You are all the world to me." And she left me.

Though her reassurance was priceless, I sat there stunned. I seemed to have lost all power of action. It was as though I had taken a strong dose of chloral. For several minutes my imagination was busy, battling in every direction. I knew Alexandra to be a woman of determination, of moods, of great latent power. But she had never acted this way before. There was something about this move that I couldn't . . . I seemed to sense the possibility of . . . I knew not what. Ignorance may be bliss—but the consciousness of ignorance breeds fear.

I pulled myself together, sought out old Mohamet Ali, attended to Alexandra's errands, and left word at the desk that if I were wanted I could be found on the terrace. Alexandra had implied that she did not wish to see me until she sent for me. I would keep out of her way, but if she should need me she could find me.

And there I sat, in a dark corner of the terrace, oblivious of the comings and goings of other guests, heedless of the cries of street vendors—only vaguely conscious of the shrill notes of the kites soaring aloft. I was not aware of the passing of time—all values seemed non-existent. I was weighed down by a feeling of suspense. I felt as one must who, found guilty on a charge he knows not of, awaits sentence. We may be all chemistry, driven by physics, but there is a psychic nature in us more subtle than either.

Were we to flee from some one? Was Paul Lanfiere bound that way? Why should we fear him? Were we to go back to America or to . . .? It had been our plan, and passage had been engaged, to leave the following week for Constantinople, for we were to spend the summer in Poland. Or—and that was the thing that really worried me—was I to be sent back—to America—or . . .

I brooded and pondered. . . . The first gong for dinner echoed through the corridors; and the second gong. Soon the few guests began to reappear for coffee and cognac. The little crowd thinned out—and I was again alone. Just how or when I found my way to my bed, I don't remember, nor how I got through the night. Do you know how you felt the night you were weaned and placed in a crib, alone—out in the world? I don't either, but that's the way I felt that night. Usually I can readjust myself. No readjustment came. For me it was Alexandra, or . . . nothing. There seemed no alternative.

I put in a very bad day. In the afternoon the mail came. In it a letter from Father. I dreaded to open it. I knew what he would say. I was too despondent and depressed to have much appetite for his pleadings to be good, to come home, to settle down. I did mean to go home—I had been putting him off—but had rather given him to understand that I would come for the Christmas vacation, while the Lanfieres were in Moscow. But now . . . should we ever take the journey we had talked so much about, to which we were looking forward so eagerly?

I knew that Lanyon would condemn utterly my relationship with Alexandra. What would Father and Mother think? I knew they looked upon the whole thing as madness—a kind of depraved insane unnaturalness. I used to shudder when I tried to realise what they would say if they knew all.

Well . . . perhaps they were right.

I could just imagine how they would put it—the scandal-loving women of Lanyon. "For more than a year Young Low has been living with a 'fast' woman in Europe! A foreigner! Think of it!" The men of Lanyon would have to agree with them—and some of them . . . would . . . Would some of them be a bit envious? They wouldn't admit it, of course—not even to themselves—they would try to put such thoughts

behind them and would succeed generally, because they were used to inhibiting "wicked" thoughts.

At last I got the letter open—Father's letter. There was the usual news about the family—the crops—the prospect for spring lambs—the condition of the winter-wheat. And then:

"Your mother and I worry ourselves sick that you do not come back to us and settle down. Oh, my dear son, how much longer are you to stay abroad, risking your life, your very immortal soul with those foreigners who care nothing for you and who would injure you in a minute if it suited them? Why, oh poor deluded child, don't you begin your life work?

"You write that your pupils need you, that that Polish woman needs you. What can be *their* need compared with *ours* who love you and have cared for you with loving hands? They are strangers, just foreigners. How can *they* need you? And how can you stand it to stay with them so long? You must realise that they can mean nothing to you compared with us who are everything in the world to you.

"Do you know that the years are slipping by—that we have only one life and only one chance to fit ourselves for our rooms in the House of Many Mansions which our Dear Lord has prepared for us? Why delay longer, dear son?

"Not a meal or a night passes that we do not talk about you and ask the Good Lord to watch over you. But, my dear, dear son—oh, it is too terrible to talk about—is there anything *illegal* between you and that Lanfiere woman? Your mother would grieve her heart out if she thought there could be. We pray to the Good Lord to keep you clean, as you were before she spread her snares to take you away from us. May you come back to us pure and spotless as you were when you used to help your father on the farm.

"We are getting old, son. Your mother was forty-six her last birthday, and your father will soon pass the half-century mark! We are getting old! Time hurries on; we cannot stop it. Just think, fifty years old! Ah me, it makes me sad!

"Please, oh please come home to us. We need you so very, very badly.

"I enclose a sprig of old-field balsam! May its fragrance recall the blessed days so long ago when you were a boy with

us at Maplegrove. Alas! those days are gone never more to return."

A deep, dark pall of gloom settled down over me. Life, which I had accepted cheerfully, joyously day by day—life which had seemed so full, so worth-while—was cold now, and meaningless. Usually I was not conscious of my size—I was big enough to manage every situation. Now I seemed shrivelled up—a world of depression hemmed me in.

I would walk. I would get away from myself—see things from a new angle, if possible. I headed for the river.

Father must be right. . . . I had played false to all my gods. . . . I had floated off, disregarding the training of my youth, and the entreaties of my parents that I settle down. I was adrift. . . . With a move of her hand Alexandra could have brought it all back—my confidence, my self-assurance, my . . . But Alexandra was at the Mena House. Only seven miles away—but . . . Why had she gone? Why was she at the Mena House?

The river invited . . . and then I understood how Flodden could have ended his life. He, too, had simply played the game out—to cut the tangled web of life seemed simpler than living it.

Twenty-eight years old! Clinging to the skirts of a Polish woman—mother of two children—thousands of miles from home. In another year—ye Gods! I'll be carrying Alexandra's fan!

Of course Father was right. What an inconsequential thing I had been—a drifter—a Hadji on the way to Mecca, riding out life's pilgrimage in the lap of love!

But to go back—to Lanyon—to King's Mounds—to St. Louis—to . . .

At the far side of the bridge I halted and set my back to Alexandra, to begin the long walk back to Shepherd's. But I knew that behind me, beyond the river, was Alexandra—

and Alexandra was Life. Life had deserted. Ah, what a life it had been—rich, full, genuine, wholly livable, lovable!

Was it all over?

I pressed back against the parapet to let a train of pack-camels by—the line seemed unending. The yellow river swirled by, eddied, and flowed on—unending. Is not my life as worth-while as a camel train—or a yellow river? Have I come to a full stop?

Recrossing the bridge and glancing below, a familiar object caught my eye. For a second my heart stopped—there was Alexandra's dahabeeyah *Isis*. Servants were preparing her for the long vacation. A fresh realisation of my poverty and helplessness overwhelmed me. Why, my accumulated savings wouldn't keep that boat in ice for the trip to Assouan and back!

Go back to Lanyon? Teach school for a few dollars a year? Mess around among dead bones for a paltry few hundred dollars? Be looked upon as a Bœotian and a lummoX by every man who had sold his life's soul for a million?

But Garvin was no simpleton! He had not sold his soul! Garvin had made a million! Garvin had. . . . Garvin's face seemed to come up to me, from the river—it was so real I closed my eyes—and found myself by his side again on board the *Rockland*, at midnight under the stars.

What would Garvin say?

I waited, thinking—blotting out time, distance. I knew so well what the Old Man would say!

"Don't be a quitter, Son—or a coward. Life was given to you to live—live it—every hour of it. Live it hard. To live is to fight. Get in the middle of it. But—fight! And keep everlastingly at it. Fight hard—and . . . don't quit. And if you would make the most of life, dare to live it fearlessly, to do right as *you* see it, to differ, to be bigger, to be great, to be the greatest. But don't be a hog. There is room for all. And

don't scoff at those who dare to be different, nor try to check honest, unselfish energy."

I lifted my eyes to the Pyramids. Alexandra was out there—maybe off there in the sand, alone—in pain or grief or . . .

She was still my goddess—my love. . . .

I was a *man* again—bigger, stronger, braver, than ever. If separation must come . . . why, so be it. There was nothing I could not do—no avenue of success or honest endeavour was closed to me—no . . .

I could feel my arm swell—my chest heave—my abdominal muscles tense as if ready for a conquest. Strength surged through my veins.

I could move on now. My eyes saw not—nor ear heard—the strange sights and sounds that meet one between River and City, there in Egypt. Instead, I found my mind working over the problem—to what obstacle should I oppose my accumulated knowledge, my newly found strength?

Only a city would afford the opportunity I wanted—that seemed certain. New York? Yes. Chicago? Possibly. Great cities set the pace because they attract the fleet of foot, the swift of mind, the men who dare.

But the weapon? There are fights and fights!

Fragments of a conversation I had had with the Old Man came to me—it had come early in our friendship. I had forgotten it, for at the time it seemed so entirely impersonal in its application. As I walked back to the city I could almost recall his words.

"Influence of the pulpit? The great, the supreme influence in the world is—the newspaper—and will be as long as ignorance forces our uncritical public into being led by a medium which succeeds only when it pays. Something—possibly the stage—may supplant the newspaper, as the press supplanted the pulpit. When it comes, go after it.

"Get a newspaper! And for God's sake, be the one man

in America who believes in himself, who can't be brow-beaten, who dares to dare, and who can't be bought—by money, fame, social position, or hope of glory."

Why not? Get a newspaper! Why not? I could do it. I knew I could.

"Don't criticise the paper that preaches morality on one page and panders to vice on the next. Buy it up—destroy it. Don't . . . Son, don't, for humanity's sake, ever imagine yourself to be Providence. Be careful how you pull up a weed. You may only know the bird from the flower. You may not know weeds. Take counsel of brave men on matters of this sort. And beware of uplifters—men who uplift for the money there is in it. Nor forget that every problem is as old as humanity. No age produces so many catharsisists as ours."

How Dad hated the professional uplifter!

I remembered other conversations as I walked along—things that Garvin had said which would govern me in my newspaper—for I already felt myself the potential owner of a great newspaper—preferably the *Sun*. Money enough to run that paper just exactly as I damned please! To pay the reporters a man's wages! And each should be a real man—should have lived in Europe and in Asia, should be able to talk understandingly with Poincaré, the Viceroy of India, and the Emperor of China, and to listen sympathetically to a prostitute, a pauper, an anarchist, or a murderer. No mere *interviewers*! Instead—interpreters, men who could report relationships—without which facts are of little value and sometimes are not the facts they seem to be.

And then—to be free! To be independent—to tell every devil to go to hell! To come right out with it! Garvin thought our press *too* free. That's the whole trouble with it, he said. "Free? Why, the average newspaper is as free as a ward politician with the itch to get rich quick. Newspapers have followed the example set by our universities—and over the door of sanctum, editor and president write 'We-want-more-money.' And the 'successful' get it."

I should gather advertisements—as news—my paper's honour would be behind each article advertised in it. The discovery of a *real* bargain would be *news*! It would not accept the advertising of charlatans, quacks, montebanks, in whatsoever guise.

And I would print *news*. I should not set myself up as an infallible judge, but I should like to be able to smite—not with an avenging or a ruthless sword, but with an axe that would open up situations, so that people might see the real men who plunder public economies and debauch public morals.

News! Every inspired thought, every brave deed, would be news. I would not cater to the inherent passions of human nature, or furnish that on which such weakness feeds by serving it in the guise of “what the public wants.” I would show that a fortuitous social lapse, or a war, is not news, but merely the inevitable result of a sequence of events which began long ago and which we still foster and hand on, undiminished, to posterity.

To make—to own a newspaper, that should mould public opinion—that should record impartially day by day the steady march of the earth's millions toward the fulfilment of human destiny—that should interpret sympathetically the struggles of the crushed and the helpless—that should handle all men with understanding and no man with malice—that would make wars impossible and tariffs incredible! And my measure of success would be the measure of joy I had in knowing that I was serving honestly and intelligently my race—the human race!

At that moment I felt I was the greatest man in the world. I would have undertaken anything.

My feet brought me to the hotel terrace—my lips ordered tea. It choked me. I could not live without Alexandra. At any rate I wanted to feel that way. I thought it was due a woman who had come down from Olympus to be companion, friend, pal, lover to me—who had made possible those two wonderful years in Peru and these infinitely more wonderful

months in Europe. Without her I should have been . . . That *was* a puzzler.

I managed to project myself beyond me so that my other self stood over against the wall of the hotel—while I sat at a little tea-table and sized him up. “Young Low,” I said to the man against the wall, “come over here and sit down; I want to talk with you.

“You haven’t done so badly—all things considered. Let’s get this squarely in front of us. It’s no good to regret. You are up against it. Better make the best of it. Let’s be sure that we are right—and then go ahead! as Father used to say. You haven’t failed yet. You never failed yet. You never will. That is not your line. You have seen a lot of this world—and the rest of it is before you. There are no strings to you—nobody is holding you back. But life wouldn’t be a failure for you if you went back to the Maplegrove and grew hogs and hominy. That’s an honourable occupation—and not crowded—and most necessary.

“But that also is not your line. Now about this newspaper business—you may not do all that. But, by all the gods, you cannot succeed unless you can image success. A prediction is a wish. A vision opens the door of possible accomplishment. You have no capital—no pull—but, by the Lord Harry, you have brains and body. It is no disgrace to fail honestly—but you won’t fail. Put yourself in motion—on a track that has a goal. These months haven’t been wasted—far, very far from it. But if you keep it up indefinitely, it would never get you anywhere. You’ve been out in a green meadow. Get on the shining rails. You may not get that great newspaper—but you can’t get it if you don’t start after it. You can make money—if that alone is your goal. Look at the men who do!”

I knew that what I had said to Young Low was sound advice. Would he take it? He could. He had ability. He had vision. To want is the first step—to get! He could do it—or something else just as worth-while. I could already see him

the foremost power in the American world of letters—not *belles lettres* but news getters. Would he?

Loyalty to Alexandra brought me back again. But I knew that Young Low had discounted separation—and already, deep down in his heart, was stripping for the next race—the race he would begin the moment he felt the intoxicating pulse of American life again.

I wonder what Alexandra is thinking of—out there at the Mena House! I ordered a fresh pot of tea.

On the morning of the third day I ventured as far as the museum, where I felt at home among the mummies of Pharaohs. I didn't want to be far from the Hotel. Alexandra might send for me any moment. When I returned at noon a note was delivered to me, addressed by a hand more priceless to me than that of any queen that ever lived in Egypt. The writer asked me to meet her at the foot of the Great Pyramid at five, that afternoon.

That five meant five—not two, nor half-past four. Alexandra had reasons for things.

My impatience was pitiable as I dug my toes in the sand up the hill, at the end of the carriage road. I was under the spell again—New York was very vague. Alexandra was very real—and near. Now I could see her strong, slender figure silhouetted in white against the dark granite of the old tomb.

She greeted me as though it were but an hour ago that we had parted.

"I've always wanted to get to the top. I think I can to-day. Will you go with me?"

Would I? Just then I could have dismembered that tomb if she had asked it.

We started up at once, an Arab in front, on each side, and behind each of us. We were pulled and pushed and lifted, and almost before we knew it, reached the summit. Now, on ordinary occasions, those Arab beggars would have stayed with

us, matching oriental cunning against occidental childishness for the sake of *piasters*. But as usual, Alexandra had arranged. Our guides withdrew, without a word. I gave her a questioning look.

"Oh, they're just down below there. They will come when you call."

The sun was big yet and full in the west. The shadow of the tomb stretched far out into the valley. We spread a rug down and sat there, side by side, with the sun at our back.

Everything was in Alexandra's hands. And I waited for her to make the move.

"Are you happy?"

"Inconceivably so, strangely so. Happier than I ever have been before in my life."

"I am glad." And she took my face to hers and kissed me.

"Do you love me?"

"Does the Nile valley love water?"

Alexandra opened her bag and took out of it a paper which I at once recognised as the cablegram. It read:

"LANFIERE SHEPHERDS CAIRO

"Paul died suddenly heart failure body cremated to-day no ceremony properly attested will leaves each child and yourself life annuity ten thousand also all houses contents boston new york entire balance estate trust fund endowment boston motherhood cable me instructions.

"J. ALDEN LANFIERE."

Thought moved faster than the eye as I read that cablegram. It contained much. But only one thing of import to me—Paul Lanfiere was dead! This woman at my side was free! We would be married! For more than a year I had dreaded to think of Lanfiere or of Lanyon. Now I could go back. . . . I could. . . . Alexandra must have read my thoughts.

"Now, beloved, I have found out how much I love you. I am going to find out how much you love me."

I tried to get a word in.

"Listen, dear, I am in earnest. I need your help. That is why we are up here alone. That is why I ran away from you. I had to be alone. I wanted to be alone with you now. It has been hard, God knows. It has been harder than I had imagined it could be, for I have done what I did not dare believe I could do."

I felt as though I were beneath the awful mass of that tomb—but the load must lift soon.

"Will you, dear, help me in this? Look at me."

I moved a little closer, held her tight in my arms. "Alexandra, I think you are condemning me to death. You taught me to love deeply. I will show you that I can. . . ."

"Good. And I tell you again, beloved, I have cut my heart out. I can't believe that I could do what I have done. But I know I am right. It has been hard, hard as it would be to see myself lowered into the ground in the dead of winter. Don't make it harder, dear, for I have fought this fight and I have won. I *must* win. Don't make me fight it over again."

I could scarcely see her tears through mine.

"Listen, dear. You have been my companion, friend, lover, all these splendid months. That, I think, is my allotment of supreme happiness. I don't think I dare tempt fate longer. Our life has been perfect. The memory of it must remain so.

"But I feel," she continued, after jabbing at her eyes with a handkerchief, "that I owe you more than a decision, and I want to tell you, if I can, something of all that has gone through my mind since I received that message. My first thought was that your soul and mine could now soar to heaven untrammelled. There was something so unnatural about that joy that I decided to think it over. I wanted to be alone. And so I left you back at Shepheard's and I came out here. Forenoon and afternoon I have gone out there on the desert, alone, and sitting under our old blue umbrella I have poured sand through my fingers and thought it all out. And I know that I am right.

"I am thirty-six, you are twenty-eight. That isn't a great deal of difference, but it is the wrong way. Were our ages reversed, we . . . But I refuse to allow myself to think of that. I shall be an old woman at forty-five!"

I tried to protest.

"Remember your promise, dear. Oh, I should be young enough, but I shall have used up this body of mine. I am not sedate. I have suffered. For years I suffered intensely. You came, and I was supremely happy. But you know that I am not one of the growing-old-sweetly kind. I will have to pay. . . . I am selfish. I think that is *the* reason why I have to give you up. I am afraid that I cannot hold you. I won't try. It would be an injustice to you, if I could. I am afraid to try.

"There are other considerations. America is your home. Europe is mine. Mr. Lanfiere's death releases me. I don't know when I shall go back. Poland is my home. There . . ."

"But . . ."

"Listen, dear. I know that you would stay here, go to the ends of the earth with me, do anything. That is not enough. You have your duty, too. You cannot afford permanently to offend and bring grief to relatives by alienating yourself from your native land. You have father, mother, brother, sister, friends. . . . A thousand ties bind you to America, a thousand strings pull you back, a thousand ambitions fight to take you away from me. You would be forced to heed that call, sooner or later. Oh, I have known, deep within me, that we could not go on indefinitely. I have been selfish enough to take stock, now and then, in order to find just where we stood. You mean so very much to me. But I cannot allow my selfishness to mar your life, or your happiness. I am not going to, dear—even if I could. Oh, I have decided that!"

I felt I had to say something or jump off that pyramid. "Yes," I said, "but we're here, aren't we? You *won't* drive me away, will you? You . . ."

"Yes, when we leave this pyramid, we part. I want you

to go back to Cairo to-night. Mohamet Ali has reserved a cabin for you on the New York boat."

Again I tried to interrupt. I *must* speak.

"Not yet, dear; let me finish. It *must* be this way, Young. Don't you see, dear boy, what I am giving up? The whole world is before you. You have hardly begun life. You have the best of your life to live."

I tried to protest.

"Please! When you leave, my life's happiness will have passed me by. Oh, I shall have work to do and I shall be . . . I have laid up a great store of happiness. I shall draw on that. I shall never marry. I think . . . I do not know what I shall do, but if I can interest myself in the life of my children, if I can find work for my hands and brain in behalf of my country . . . I . . . Of course, I shall be happy. I shall think of this day, of this hour, best beloved. . . . I should have to hold myself forever unworthy of the happiness we have had if I could not make this renunciation."

Renunciation! Was the woman mad? I felt I should lose my reason if I let her talk on. Every word she said seemed to make our doom more certain—drove another nail into the coffin of my soul. I could stand it no longer. That strength that had been mine the day before in Cairo, when I was discounting possible defeat, now came back infinitely stronger—to fight against this still to me strange, unreasonable and inexorable whim of this . . . Could it be the same—my Alexandra? I caught her in my arms and forced her to silence. But the agony in her face was too much. Never was appeal of woman so great. And when she said, "Dear, you will kill me," what could I do? My protest was only grinding the life out of her body.

She had decided. I could prove my love by acquiescence!

Why, oh why, did I acquiesce? That is a question I've asked myself countless times. Alexandra proved herself—at least I'm sure she thought she did—strong by taking the stand she did. But why couldn't, why didn't she give me a chance

to prove to her that my ambitions would not catch me up—as she contended they would—in a maelstrom of interests, enslaving, chaining, weaning me away from her?

I simply couldn't struggle on. I made no headway. The more I pleaded to be heard . . . Her grief was so poignant it seemed cruel to torture her more.

Dazed, crushed, heartbroken, I fell on my knees at her feet and begged her forgiveness. The reward was a tear-dimmed smile that came from a heart that must be relieved a little of the load it staggered under. That little smile of gratitude is the most sacred memory of my life.

For a long time we sat, while I held tight her little sobbing body, doing my best to restore some tranquillity to her soul. But no word was spoken.

The great ball of fire in the west was just beginning to rest lightly on the desert. The shadow of the Great Pyramid had crept far out over the green fields below us. Down there was the Sphinx—silent, inscrutable. Alexandra sighed a long sigh, dried her eyes and would have kissed my tears away if I would have allowed it.

We turned toward the light. Then Alexandra pulled herself together and in her sad, quiet way, said:

"And now, dear, what will you do with this life that I give back to you?"

"While you held it, Alexandra, it seemed worth while. It was big, round, full, rich in colour. In a moment the bubble has vanished. My life is like the sun itself that but a moment ago seemed so big and round and rich; but now it is gone. There is nothing out there but sand—dead, cold, drab sand."

"Don't be unkind, dear," said Alexandra. "Don't make it too hard for me. The sun will come up again. The ball of life will float for you again. There is nothing you can't do, is there?"

"What, in God's name, *can* I do, Alexandra? I tell you the sun will never come up. It has gone down forever." She

straightened up her little body and crouched forward as though straining to see beyond the horizon, as though she could look into eternity.

"What do you see, dear? What do you see out there?"

"*You*. Oh! do not strive for the kind of power Paul Lanfiere wielded. But stand for truth and your fellow men . . . and not for love of power, or of your caste. And you will be truly great. Your country has need of such. You can approach its problems with an open mind. You are not committed to any allegiance, creed, or doctrine. You are strong, you have energy and faith—put these into action. You have knowledge, the ability to acquire knowledge, and judgment. You can achieve. Life isn't precept, but practice. The expedient is more important than obsessions of old formulas or ideas of new Utopias."

I heard what she said. But her words meant nothing to me. No picture of opportunity or mirror of greatness that she could hold up seemed worthy a moment's consideration in the face of all that was so soon to end. I could but listen with respectful attention.

"American problems," continued Alexandra, "are modern problems—and they demand attention. America's prosperity and happiness depend upon the solution. You will not be content to study history. You will want to make history."

"But we can't all make history."

"No, but if we can't we can at least get out of the road and let history be made—we can be a part of history in the making. I see a future for you, way out there, my dear. *Your* country is the land of to-day—there is so much to do! Why, oh, why am I not a man? But you are of the new blood which dares think new things.

"No, *mon ami*, you will not go back to your bone-room. You will let the old fossils lie hidden in the mountains a little longer, while you tackle the living. You will prefer the laboratory of life. This year in Europe has already put you in sympathy with the hundreds of thousands of keen, ambitious, impetuous

youths who are pouring into your country. Their ideas are not your ideals, but they are like you—young and eager to work. These Italians and Slavs will become Americans! Will their blood dominate America? Think what that means! Think how that vast mass is treated to-day! It demands consideration; it gets scorn or is told to shut up because it is vulgar to protest!

"Providence is not watching over Americans any more than it watched over the builders of this Pyramid. Don't rely on the Lord. Help Him if you think you know how, and ask His help if you really know what you want. Your country is great because you have worked to make it great.

"You are as young as your country. Dare to be as big and as brave. What if the pundits call you a demagogue, or the Vested Interests say you are a traitor, or the snobs dub you a charlatan—it will be worth it.

"You, who are to be a leader . . ."

Her tired little body gave way, and I gathered her up in my arms and held her as I loved to, as I often held her. "Don't be serious any more, dear, I don't want to be a leader. I just want to go on loving you, and on, and on. Suppose I were a leader. Suppose I could do all the things that you say. Just suppose it, dear. What would it all amount to?"

"Oh, if it only could bring you back to me!"

"It can. It will. It has."

"Don't," she sobbed, "please don't."

The moon had climbed to the level of the Mokattam Hills. Napoleon's windmills stood out in pale relief.

"Napoleon thought he was a leader, dear."

The name stirred the fiery blood of the Pole within her. She straightened up.

"That monster! Ugh! He led to destruction and misunderstanding. He was the world's greatest enemy."

"And a traitor to Poland."

"Thank you for that, dear."

That was the nearest approach to animosity that I had ever seen in Alexandra.

Why couldn't we just stay here, just stay up here all night, and all day, and all time! I proposed it.

"You know, dear, if you don't get me down from here pretty soon you will never get me down. I begin to be faint. I have eaten nothing since yesterday."

"May I have one minute more?"

She clasped my hands behind her neck for answer. I don't know how long we sat there—at peace. The moon flooded the Alabaster Mosque, smiled down on Cairo, and silvered the silent river.

She moved.

"Not yet, dear! Just one more moment. I can't go away without telling you this—you have not convinced me. But I accept your decision, Alexandra—to please you. If I must take the life which I gave you—if I must—I will. But your spirit will guide it till the end. I accept it—in truth. Our relationship has meant . . . why try to tell you? You know what it has meant. I realise . . . you have forced me to see that it cannot go on forever. I really see that. We break it now—now, while it is holy—now, when the memory of it must ever remain glorious with us. I will be worthy of you, dear—yes, and of Paul and of Pauline. And so, my blessed Alexandra . . ."

I could say no more. We stood—she smiling saintly through her tears—as I kissed them away—holding her in my arms—a full minute.

"Come, dear, shall we go down now?"

I called to the Arabs.

I had thought that I would stay the night at the Mena House. Alexandra had said that we were to part at the Pyramid, but I felt certain she would not hold me to this. But when we got down and she stood there all in white against the monstrous mass of sepulchral granite and held out her

arms to me, I knew the time had come. It were profanation of her and of our love to think else. There remained only the adieus.

"Good-bye! And God bless you, Alexandra!"

I left her there—white, spotless, a woman of flesh, an angel of purity, against the dark stone—and plunged off down below through the deep sand toward the village.

THE END

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